Geographers Find Earthly Happiness

“Happiness… is not a fish that you can catch,” according to Canadian rock band Our Lady Peace. But it is, apparently, something you can earn by studying Geography.

Graeme Wynn, Department Head

Earlier this year, The Vancouver Sun reported the results of research at Carleton University that demonstrated a symbiotic relationship between nature and human happiness. Evidence accumulated from hundreds of questionnaires showed that people connected to nature are happy. Moreover, happy people tread more lightly on the earth by living more ecologically-friendly lives. The researchers drew the conclusion that taking a course in Geography makes people happier. Indeed, a comparison between students enrolled in nature-related courses and others who were not revealed that the former group was happy, and grew happier during the term even as other students became increasingly disgruntled. This, of course, made them more agreeable individuals. (Should you know of any irked persons doubtful of the power and value of Geography, you can direct them to the story on pages D1 and D2 of The Vancouver Sun, May 3, 2008).

Given the now widely-recognized value of the discipline and the credential of our graduates, it is a pleasure to know that you are all happier than you might otherwise have been. I relish the opportunity to make you already agreeable folks even happier by updating you on UBC Geography.

Happiness, energy and enthusiasm have certainly been evident in the Geography building this year, thanks to the work of the Geography Students’ Association. Led by Nick Gallant and a cast of dozens (if not thousands), the GSA once again demonstrated the importance of student involvement, the opportunities for student leadership generated by such organizations, and the capacity of successive generations of students to bring new ideas and enthusiasm into the department and university. Among the several successes of the 2007-08 GSA, I have space only to note the impressive continuation of Trail Six, a journal that showcases some of the best essays produced by students in Geography classes; a return to Cecil Green Park House for the Graduating Class Gala; and the introduction of the Faculty Cup for competition between Human and Physical geographers. This year the cup was won by Physical Geography colleagues on the (somewhat suspect) basis of points given for participation in GSA events – from field trips to geopits. Those Carleton psychologists will be happy to know that the Human geographers remain happy despite their loss.

On the faculty front, we were joined in mid-year by Dr. Simon Donner, who came to us from the Science, Technology and Environment Program in the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Simon, a native of Toronto, graduated from the interdisciplinary Arts and Science Program at McMaster, took a master’s degree in Environmental Management (specializing in air and water resources) from the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, and took his PhD in Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences at the Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment in the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Simon’s research stretches across the traditional boundaries between disciplines to examine the causes and effects of climate and global change, with particular emphases on climate change impacts on nutrient

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We lament the passing of Geography’s founding head Lew Robinson. Read about his life and invaluable contributions to the Geography profession, in particular to this department, on the newsletter insert. Please send your messages and memories to Sally Hermansen at sallyh@geog.ubc.ca
**Faculty Research**

**Brett Eaton and Dan Moore**

In August 2003, the Mclure Fire burned through several watersheds north of Kamloops, including Fishtrap Creek. High fuel loads, dry initial conditions, and strong winds resulted in an extremely high intensity fire that was difficult to contain. The burn of Fishtrap Creek Watershed was extensive, affecting 70 per cent of the catchment and killing almost all of the trees in the riparian area. Since the fire, substantial salvage harvesting has occurred. Working with collaborators from the Ministry of Forests and Range, Ministry of Environment, Thompson Rivers University and University of Northern British Columbia, Brett Eaton and Dan Moore have been monitoring post-fire changes in hydrology, geomorphology, water quality and aquatic ecology. The project has already yielded an MSc thesis by a UBC Geography graduate student (Jeff Phillips), and two further MSc projects are underway (Jason Leach and Christie Andrews). For further information, consult the project web site: www.geo.ubc.ca/~bateon/Fishtrap/Overview.html.

**Simon Donner**

Simon Donner joined the faculty earlier this year. As a climate scientist and an ecologist, he is motivated by a simple question: Why does climate matter? For his research, he uses numerical modeling and field observations to examine how changes in the climate over time affect biogeochemical cycling, aquatic ecosystems like coral reefs, and, in turn, human decisions. Two areas of ongoing research include the environmental consequences of growing biofuels and the effects of climate change on coral reefs across the Pacific Ocean. This work provides insight into the causes and effects of climate change, the efficacy of policy and mitigation options, and the consequences for human welfare. Simon brings perspective from this research to courses like Geo 312: Global Climate System and his new course on Global Biogeochemistry. He also works to educate the public and policymakers on the science of climate change and related issues through seminars and popular writing.

**Renewal of the Metropolis Project**

In October 2007, SSHRC announced that the Vancouver Metropolis Centre, which brings together researchers from UBC, SFU, and Uvic, has been renewed with a base grant of $1.5 million for the five-year term. The provincial Ministry of the Attorney General will provide an additional $100,000 per year to the centre, which has been renamed Metropolis British Columbia (MBC) in recognition of this new relationship. MBC’s task is to provide databases, analyses, and findings from a multidisciplinary academic team that address a wide range of issues in the fields of immigration, integration, and cultural diversity. The main objective is to generate research that will aid rational discussion on Canada’s emerging immigration policy issues. Dan Hiebert is currently co-director of MBC. For more information, please consult mbc.metropolis.net, Canada.metropolis.net, and international.metropolis.net.

**Tom Koch**

Last fall, adjunct professor Tom Koch presented a series of lectures on Medical Geography and Cartography at Texas A&M University as the 2008 distinguished lecturer in Medicine and as the plenary speaker at a CDC-sponsored seminar on GIS and public health. He has also lectured on Medical Ethics and early maps of cholera, and is involved with UBC Geography emeritus professor Ken Denika on Medical Statistics and Cartography.

**Geography 350 Field Trip**

Trevor Barnes has been around the block a few times... and the block keeps changing

By Trevor Barnes

I’ve been running a self-guided field trip to the Downtown Eastside and North Shore of False Creek in my Urban Geography 350 class for at least twenty years. There have been a few anxious moments – such as the time some students were caught in a pepper spraying hijinks at a bus stop on Pender Street, or another time when a couple of students gave a $100 to a man who wrote them a bad cheque. However, everyone who has been on the field trip made it back. No one has ever gone missing. Obviously the students do the route only once, but as the instructor I do it every year. The transformations over twenty years have been enormous. And this year the changes were particularly pronounced.

On a very cold February afternoon I went with Dawn Bieber, who was teaching the other section of Urban Geography. The only two blocks that were unaltered were the first two of the route, between Gore and Jackson on Powell Street. After that it was all change: White gentrifiers on every block, and yet more chi-chi shops selling conspicuous consumption bric-a-brac to the professional and early maps of cholera, and is involved with UBC Geography emeritus professor Ken Denika on Medical Statistics and Cartography.

**Faculty Honoured**

Timothy R. Oke was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean for his contributions to meteorology and urban climatology, as well as for his mentoring of generations of geographers. The Order of Canada is the highest honour within the Canadian system of honours, with membership awarded to those who exemplify the order’s motto, desiderantes meliorem patriam (they desire a better country).

Graeme Wynne has been elected to Fellowship in the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of his status "among the leading Historical Geographers and Environmental Historians in the English-speaking world." He joins men and women selected by their peers on account of their outstanding contributions to the arts and sciences. Fellowship in the Society is the highest academic accolade available to scientists and scholars in Canada.
Undergraduate Community Service Learning

Community Service Learning (CSL) is a UBC model of experiential learning that combines voluntary community service with classroom learning. The university’s goal is to engage 10 per cent of students in CSL each year. Each such project took place in three Geography courses this year.

Advanced Cartography

For their final course project, four students signed up to create a set of maps for a woman’s transition house. They worked with the community group in the mapping process, from needs analysis to finished product. In another CSL project, a student worked with a grade seven class at Grandview Elementary School to create a map of the community gardens, thereby teaching the students spatial mapping skills.

Co-ordinated Arts Program

Graeme Wynn and Post Doctoral Teaching Fellow Dawn Biehler combined with other instructors from English and Interdisciplinary Studies to offer a new Co-ordinated Arts Program CAP section on the theme of Civil and Sustainable Societies. Students in the course extend their studies off campus by working on a series of projects that engage with and promote sustainable living in the community. The year involved a project in North Vancouver, where the class reviewed the environmental impact of the school and helped to formulate strategies to make the school more sustainable. Another project involved working with a non-profit organization called Evergreen to map invasive species in Mahon Park. The mapping was achieved by marking grid corners in the forest, then drawing what was observed and edited, thereby teaching the students spatial mapping skills.

Biogeography

Students from two Biogeography classes joined together to participate in a reading week volunteer project in North Vancouver, working with a non-profit organization called Evergreen to map invasive species in Mahon Park. The mapping was achieved by marking grid corners in the forest, then drawing what was observed and edited, thereby teaching the students spatial mapping skills.

Donations

Endowment Fund: $6255
Scholarship fund: $17405
Newsletter Operating Account: $385

Thanks so very much to all who contributed.

Geography Student Association

The GSA has doubled membership, improved communication, and bridged the gap between Arts and Science geographers.

By Nick Gallant

This year’s GSA fielded a strong team of exec and non-exec, and brought us to the forefront of the campus community. We were proud to take on a number of projects that were not only beneficial to the department, but helped the campus as a whole.

Graduate Student Report

Grad students continue to support each other’s learning and provide social avenues for fun and camaraderie.

By Tyler Pearce et al.

Although grad students spend varying amounts of time in the Geography building—taking off to far-flung field sites or experiencing bouts of ‘Geog High Avoidance Syndrome’—they continue to support each other’s learning and provide social avenues for fun and camaraderie. The Graduate Student Forum, in particular, has dedicated itself to this end.

The Forum, which met several times a year, was attuned to the rising anxiety of thesis-writers, inaugurated bi-weekly happy hours, first at Koerner and later off-campus at the Copper Tank and other pubs. They also organized an end-of-year BBQ, which included some outstanding veggie shish kebabs. Attuned to a need for wakefulness and liquid of a different nature, the Coffee Committee kept a morsel of monies and harassed, as needed, the deep-in-the-red-guzzlers among us.

Our newest Grad Forum committee, focused on the lines of communication among grads, between grads and faculty, and between grads and undergrads (the last effort largely initiated by the Geography Students’ Association). Forum discussions often touched on grad-led initiatives. Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, for example, asked how graduate students might encourage the department to support diversity at the institutional level.

We also organized a Human Geography seminar, which opened with a panel of grad students reflecting on the formulation of their research methodology. Attendees welcomed eleven human geography faculty, including new contributions this year from Juanda Sundberg (participants experimented with the ‘crime and deviance’ paradigm, located in micro-level studies to offer a new Co-ordinated Arts Program).

Graduate Student reps fielded grad forum questions about the new and mysterious graduate funding program, the Graduate Support Initiative, but had little more than rumour to go on. And so they asked grads to submit questions about this new initiative to the department head and numerous other individuals who might be in a position to provide a module on the research methodology. Attendees welcomed eleven human geography faculty, including new contributions this year from Juanda Sundberg (participants experimented with the ‘crime and deviance’ paradigm, located in micro-level studies to offer a new Co-ordinated Arts Program).
Several organizations at UBC use mapping as the consolidation of power within the nuanced examination of the role of law in British Columbia, offering a new and critical perspective between the colonial land policy and the American relationship with abundance. This book reveals the contradictions and consequences of an Indian land policy in the British Columbia context. It shows how deeply this encounter differed from an American perspective. The book begins with a description of land and life in northern British Columbia and ends by considering the relationship between the pattern of early Canada and the American relationship. The book also shows how an archipelago of scattered islands was recalibrated in this non-European space. It reveals the contradictions and consequences of this encounter. 

This year marked the release of the second edition of The Reluctant Land. An Undergraduate Journal of Geography. Editors-in-chief Rory Babin and Eva Litquist assembled a team of undergraduate and graduate students to select and edit paper submissions. The articles drew from all levels of Geography – from human to environmental to physical – touching on topics such as the 2010 Olympics, the Canadian concept of nature, the Norwegian anchoveta industry, and uncertainties in the Gibeons’ aquifer. On March 27, the journal was released to a fanfare of students and faculty at the Journal Release Party, which preceded GeoGala. The journal has also been purchased by Simon Fraser University and University of Alberta libraries, and the Geographic Information Centre at UBC. If you’re interested in more information about the journal, or would like to purchase a copy, please contact us at geoG_journal@hotmail.com.

Where Are They Now?

1960’s

Ann McAllo (Pickard), BA’62, MA’67, PhD (Planning & Urban Land ‘77), retired to co-director of Planning for Vancouver City in 2006. Since retiring, she has been advising cities in the Philippines, China, the Philippines, Sweden, Ukraine, Austria, and New Zealand and has been involved in projects for the Canadian International Development Agency and World Bank. She has undertaken work, travel, and a sabbatical. Ann found time to return to UBC to serve on Senate and as an adjunct professor teaching a course in Strategic Planning. …

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Margaret Miller (Dally), BA’80, is the Environmental CAD Services Lead for WesteynParsons in the Burnaby office. WesteynParsons is a leading provider of professional services to the energy, resources and complex process industries. …

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Joe Rogers, BA’90, owns and operates a commercial real estate company, Strategic Real Estate Ltd. He is responsible for develop planning and site acquisition for multi-unit tenants across Western Canada, where understanding of urban growth patterns, spatial distribution, traffic infrastructure, population and demographic analysis, aerial photography and land use patterns, etc. is fundamental to the real estate business. …

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Matt Ward, BA’00, Med’06 (UWA), is now teaching geography in a senior high school in Perth, Australia … Megan Koch (Stubbs), BA’00, is a graphic design apprentice in the marketing department at Glunz & Jensen in Ringsted, Denmark … Paul Mitchison, BA’01, is an investment advisor … Sarah MacKenzie, BA’01, BEd’07, is an elementary school teacher in two West Vancouver schools … Barbara Odenwald, BA’93, BEd’01, is the manager of the Education Outreach Program at the Library of Parliament in Ottawa … Roman Kaminsky, BC’02, works for NAVTEQ as a team lead for the Pacific North Coast. NAVTEQ is the leading digital map provider in the world … Katherine Muncaster, BA’02, is completing a Masters of Resource Management at SFU and starting a job in the Alternative Energy Division at the BC Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources as a senior policy advisor, (Buildings, Communities and Demand Side Management) … Julie Robinson, BA’02, works in mining/exploration for Fronteer Development Group as a GIS administrator and concentrates mainly on database management and cartographic requests from geologists travelling to Argentina, Reno and the Yukon Territory … Katherine Phillips, BA’02, is living in the UK while completing a Master’s degree in Local and Regional Economic Development … Ian Ponsford, BA’03, is a specialist in Environmental Management for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics … Lilina Lysenko, BA’03, is practicing natural resource law in the Kootenays … Colleen Nystedt, BA’03, is founder and CEO of MovieSet, selected by AlwaysOn as one of the OnHollywood 100 Top Private Companies … Caroline Desbiens, PhD’02, works at Laval University as a CRC … Michael Wang, BA’03, is doing cartographic work with Adobe Illustrator for Backroad Mapbooks, using ArcGIS for the initial processing of the base data … Tracy Yik, BA’04, is currently on maternity leave from Terasen Gas, where she works as a planning technician coordinating and planning gas line and meter installation for residential and commercial buildings … Sara Sandwith, BA’04, worked for Parks Canada for two years before heading to medical school at McMaster University, where she is one of two geographers – both of whom think that Geography is the ideal undergraduate preparation for a career in medicine … Sandy Chan, BA’05, is completing a Master’s in Urban Planning at the University of Hong Kong, working as the research assistant on China’s urban villages and urban renewal in Hong Kong … Benjamin Zimmerman, BA’05, is working for Camoin Associates (NY), a consulting firm providing economic development strategic planning and consulting services for communities … Ken Leung, BA’07, will be starting his first year at Harvard Law School in September.