

## **CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography**

### **Dr Barry Smit**



Dr. Barry Smit, Professor of Geography at the University of Guelph, has a truly outstanding record of geographic scholarly accomplishment. Across a career that now exceeds three decades, Dr. Smit has amassed an impressive body of scholarly work in geography. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, 5 books, and numerous chapters and reports; delivered over 250 presentations (including distinguished lectures); was one of the first geographers to be awarded a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair; and directed major Canadian and international collaborative research programs involving more than 50 lead researchers from 14 Canadian universities and numerous international institutions. The evidence of quality and significance of impact is similarly clear. Over his academic career, Dr. Smit's development and refinement of key concepts have become foundation pieces in applied scholarship in geography and fields.

The research area for which he is best known is impacts of and adaptations to global environmental change. Dr. Smit's early work analysing economic impacts of climate change scenarios, using a programming model of land and food production, was influential in the Canadian climate change impacts programs, and contributed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Guidelines for Impact Assessment. This research evolved to consider the impact of climatic variability in addition to changing norms, and, most notably, the role of human adaptation to global environmental change. This seminal work established Dr. Smit as a leading international expert in the field of climate change impacts and adaptation. This work also led Dr. Smit and colleagues to develop an alternative approach to assessing climate change implications by conceptualizing climate change as one source of 'vulnerability', and employing bottom-up, multiple-exposure analysis in a variety of settings, from the Canadian prairies to Bangladesh, Samoa, Chile, and the Canadian Arctic. This approach has helped establish a suite of new concepts that are now widely employed in Canadian and international climate change scholarship and policy.

His academic expertise and commitment to translating scholarship into sound public policy are evident in his service on many international bodies and boards, advice to national governments, and council to numerous Canadian federal and provincial agencies. International recognition of Dr. Smit's expertise in the climate change adaptation field is evident in his selection as a Lead Author in several of the IPCC's Assessment Reports. The quality and significance of this work was recognised when the IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with former US Vice-President Al Gore. Dr. Smit has also served as a four time delegate to the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC; chair of the Canadian Taskforce on Climate Change Adaptation; Advisory committee member to Natural Resources Canada's National Assessment Report "From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate"; and a member of Ontario's Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation.

Dr. Smit is much in demand internationally as an integrator across natural and social sciences, and a thoughtful and provocative speaker. His efforts in translating scholarship into policy and practice are also manifest in numerous contributions to popular media. In addition to having his work cited in various news articles, he has published commentaries in Canadian newspapers, and been interviewed for radio and television.

Dr. Smit is an accomplished teacher and has won peer adjudicated teaching awards at the University of Guelph. Mentoring of young scholars has been a priority focus for Barry Smit and he has created a significant legacy through many graduate students and young colleagues who have gone on to develop successful careers in their own right.

Perhaps most importantly, at least for him, Dr. Smit is a proud Geographer. Indeed, when given the chance to self-identify, especially in media, he has eschewed sub-disciplinary labels, and even the discipline's human-physical divide, and called himself a Geographer – period. Dr. Smit's work has expanded geographic concepts and applications, has demonstrated the capacity of our discipline to facilitate interdisciplinary integration, and has engaged geographers in policy processes from local to international levels. He has done much for the discipline of Geography in Canada, making him an ideal recipient of the Canadian Association of Geographers' 2010 Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography.