

Newsletter of the CAG Annual Meeting

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

(Hello! It's me, Zoë A. Meletis, from the University of Northern BC)

Perhaps you know the song "Le bien, le mal" (the good, the bad) by MC Solaar? Well, that's the refrain that I've been hearing in my feminist brain for the last three years or so....

I see/hear/read/witness a lot of amazingly impressive things going on (le bien), with women and allies making waves, taking up space, demanding rights, respect, pay and power, all over the world. I see reflected in this a renewed interest in feminist slogans, activism, scholarship, popular media pieces, and more. It's "cool" to be feminist again, and that is no small shift. Catalysts such as the #metoo and #timesup movements, alongside powerful pro-choice campaigns in various parts of the world have been reinvigorating, and women of colour are finally occupying central stages/mics/political positions in greater numbers (of course a WORLD OF WORK remains to be done). There has also been mainstream support and accolades for significant recent cultural contributions challenging the dominance of the heteropatriarchy at the box office, on our smart phones, in boardrooms, and beyond. It is an EXCITING time with discussions of feminism in diverse places, and debates are raging in invigorating ways.

(Continued on Page 2)

CWAG BUSINESS MEETING AT CAGS 2019

At the upcoming annual CAG conference in Winnipeg, please join us for the CWAG business meeting!

**10:30-11:15 on Tuesday, May 28, 2019
Manitoba Hall Boardroom (2M70), University of Winnipeg**

Important agenda items to be covered:

- ⇒ welcoming new members
- ⇒ updates and ongoing discussion of the potential name change, and reaching out to a more inclusive membership
- ⇒ recent letter to CAG regarding a lack of gender equity in scholar awards; related follow-up

*We will likely add a bring-your-own-lunch continuation of this meeting, since the allotted time is so short.

A special session will be organised at CAGs to discussion the CWAG name change.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from Chair.....	1-2
FemGeog conference.....	3-5
Student profiles.....	6
UTAGA Award.....	7
Letter on CAG scholarly distinction award.....	8
CAGs 2019.....	9

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- CAGS 2019, Winnipeg, MB from May 27th to 31st
- CWAG and Indigenous Peoples Working Group event at CAGS with writer Katherine Vermette on May 30th from 5 to 7pm (see page 7 for details)

LETTER FROM CHAIR CONTINUED...

But, **le mal** is also all around us—with oppressive politics stripping women and other marginalized folks of key rights and access daily, to say the least. People are being put in cages, muzzled, quietened, and killed for seeking out basic needs and better lives, in diverse places including “liberal democracies”. This is not the 2019 that many of us had envisioned. Also disturbing is the fact that daily news is now so bad in some places that people are starting to retreat into their homes, their lives, their selves, because it seems too much to bear...

So, in this time of contrasts between the amazing **bien** and the demoralizing and deflating **mal**, it is sometimes difficult to move forward with energy and momentum, particularly while living frenetic lives.

While wanting to reassert the roles and community that CWAG offers members, logistics have been bogging us down in addition to all of us dealing with le bien et le mal. Since taking over Chair of CWAG, our Executive has had trouble meeting because of full and hectic schedules spanning several time zones. Nonetheless, we have started to move forward on the following items, and we will update and consult on these at the upcoming Business meeting at the CAG:

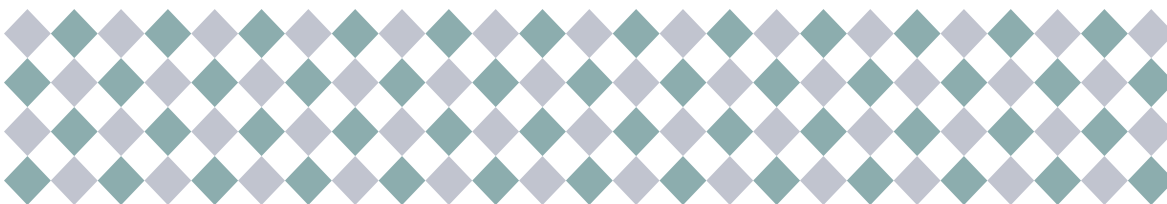
- progress on potential CWAG name changes, with input from members & non-members (watch for related message and survey link soon!)
- progress on growing the Executive to include more keen and skilled volunteers
- efforts to reimagining our membership, our functions, and our goals, with your input; and
- efforts to improve our institutional culture, and to transmit lessons learned into next phases

So, we hope to discuss all of this with many of you soon! If you would like to join the Executive, please email me at zoe.meletis@unbc.ca, there is still room!

In closing, I want to thank all of you, and especially Ebru Ustundag, Kate Parizeau, Laura Shillington, Pamela Moss, and Linda Peake, for familiarizing me with the CWAG Executive in terms of where we’ve been, and where we hope to head together in the future.

Last but not least, I often find **le bien** in my students and their fresh looks upon and interpretations of the world around us. Thanks to the UNBC Research Experience Award program and to additional funding from the UNBC Office of Research, I (along with my co-PI) Annie Booth) was able to spend several months conducting research with two phenomenal undergraduate students, **Laura Pyke and Ashley Riceman**. Laura is a top achiever and amazing participant in any classroom that I have shared with her, when she is not driving her busy children around town, and Ashley works full time for the City of Prince George, while completing her degree, and contemplating graduate school (see page 6). I will close with their explanations of our recent research collaborations and our trip together to enjoy the phenomenal FemGeog conference in Montréal this past August (thanks again to all who crafted that rich gathering).

Cheers from me! Zoë



IGU FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY PRE-CONFERENCE

Feminist Geographies in/during Troubled Times: Dialogues, Interventions and Praxis

Written by Leanne Letourneau

The Canadian Women and Geography (CWAG) specialty group of the Canadian Association of Geographers and the International Geographic Union (IGU) Commission on Gender and Geography hosted a feminist geography pre-conference with the University of Montréal on August 4-6, 2018 in Montréal, Quebec. The success of the conference was the result of the dedication and contributions of the organizing committee, which included Patricia Martin (Université de Montréal); Julie Podmore (John Abbott College); Laura Shillington (John Abbott College); Ebru Ustundag (Brock University); Marianne Blidon (Université de Paris-Sorbonne); Tiffany Muller Myrdahl (Simon Fraser University); Valerie Preston (York University); Laurence Simard-Gagnon (Queen's University); and Caroline Desbiens (Université Laval).

The theme of the conference, *Feminist Geographies in/during Troubled Times: Dialogues, Intervention and Praxis*, focused on how to practice feminist geography while experiencing ecological and societal changes. This theme was explored through intergenerational and intersectional dialogues among researchers, scholars and activists from various parts of the world who participated in workshops, roundtables and panels. The topics discussed covered a range of subjects, including Indigenous mapping, mental health, the future of work, spaces and places, the international, bodies and embodiments, feminist-queer geography as well as many other topics.

August 4th, 2018



Walking Tour of Montréal's former red light district

The first day of the conference began with a walking tour of Montréal's former Red-Light District, led by Karen Herland. The tour explored the social, economic, cultural, racial and gendered history of Montréal.





The tour ended at the feminist bookstore, *L'Euguelionne*, librairie féministe, for a welcome ceremony and party. This event not only was a chance to network in an informal setting, but it was a celebration of the retirement and contributions to feminist geographies of Dr. Fran Klodawsky (Carleton University) and Dr. Damaris Rose (Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique) with introductions by Dr. Valerie Preston (York University).



Annick Germain from INRS discusses the important contributions that Damaris has made to feminist geography and beyond



Kathryn Travers and Margaret Shaw from Women in Cities International (WIC) on how Fran has influenced the work of WCI and women's lives in cities.

August 5th, 2018

The second day consisted primarily of the workshops, roundtables and panels. The day began with a welcome from members of the organizing committee, and took place at the University of Montréal.

Continued on following page...



IGU FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY PRE-CONFERENCE CONTINUED

(Continued from page 3)

At the end of the day, the conference then moved to Le Rond Point, Café Autogéré in Montreal for a special panel on social movements. This Francophone panel, organized by Laurence Simard Gagnon and Stéphane Guimont Marceau, consisted of activists who discussed the feminist, anti-racist work in which they are involved, such as working with domestic violence survivors; working in an anti-racist and anti-fascist group; working with the intersections of migrant justice, feminism, independent media and antiracist struggles; and working as an activist in the education system.



Pratiques féministes et antiracistes dans les mouvements sociaux et groupes d'action communautaire de Montréal



August 6th, 2018



The final day, August 6th, began with an open session, Troubling CWAG: What's in a Name, to discuss the future of CWAG's name. After this session, there was the final session of panels, roundtables and workshops. The day finished with the Gender, Place and Culture editorial committee meeting. Overall, the conference was a success and enjoyed by all. New dialogues were initiated, questions asked, and solutions brought forward on how to practice feminist geography in troubled times. More importantly, spaces were created to explore the important connections between feminist geographies, queer and anti-racist geographies, political ecology and non-human geographies so that we can work in solidarity to address the societal and ecological changes that we are currently undergoing.

CWAG STUDENT PROFILES

Mentoring has been a major influence throughout my academic career at UNBC, and our research is representative of what can be accomplished when women work together. I was lucky enough to meet, volunteer alongside, and be mentored by Drs. Zoë Meletis and Annie Booth and fellow student Ashley Riceman during the IWAU 2017 series of events. This led to the unique opportunity to do original research as an undergraduate student. The culmination of this research was our trip to present our findings at the **Feminist Geographies 2018: in/during Troubled Times: Dialogues, Interventions and Praxis** conference in Montréal, QC (August 2019). The process allowed me to learn about collaborative research, how to design a research project, what is involved in conducting grounded research, coding responses and producing a collective presentation from and with some amazing and inspiring women. The opportunity to learn from, and present to, such an acclaimed group of women geographers will always be a standout highlight from my time as an undergraduate. Thank you.

Laura Pyke

Ashley Riceman

Last August I had the opportunity to travel to Montréal with my research group to present our research findings at the Feminist Geography Conference. As an undergraduate student, I had not yet had the opportunity to attend an academic conference before, let alone present at one. The experience allowed me to creatively express myself among established professors and graduate students. I appreciated the amount of support and wisdom among presenters and observers as we were all there to learn from one another. During my time at the conference I felt scared, excited, and comfortable all at the same time. Overall, I felt an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and, the experience has motivated me to pursue research via graduate school.



Laura Pyke, middle and Ashley Riceman, right, with their supervisor Zoe Meletis, left, in Montréal

Send us your Student Profiles!

If you have students who you would like to see profiled in the CWAG newsletters or if you are a student and would like to create a profile, please contact CWAG.

DAMARIS ROSE HONOURED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

The **University of Toronto Association of Geography Alumni** (UTAGA) Distinguished Alumni Award is given to alumni of the Department and its programs, who have led a career of exceptional distinction and brought honour to the department. In 2017, the award was granted to Damaris Rose. Because she was not available to attend the 2017 award ceremony, conferral of the award in person was postponed to November 2, 2018. Damaris obtained her MA in Geography from the University of Toronto in May 1978 (the same month as feminist geographer Suzanne Mackenzie). Her acceptance speech is re-printed below.

Source: <http://geography.utoronto.ca/alumni/alumni-department-award-winners/>

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

It's an absolutely huge honour to have been chosen for this award. It's not something I could have imagined even in my wildest dreams when I landed in Toronto in 1976 aged 21 with my newly-minted international student visa and a pair of oversized suitcases. And that's where I'd like to start the "thank-yous". Without the U of T "Open Fellowship" for what was then a princely sum of \$3000—from a donor fund—none of this would have happened. Paired with a teaching assistantship—decently remunerated since the Graduate Assistants' Association had just gotten union certification the previous year!—the package enabled me to begin my graduate career without financial stress and debt-free. As it turned out, this was also the last year before the provincial government implemented differential fees for international students and no less than 8 of the 19 new geography grad students were visa students. A remarkable feature of my cohort, for those times, was that 6 of the new masters' students were women, and 5 of us were urban geographers.

I am very much humbled that the selection committee has elevated me to the company of such an illustrious list of award winners who have made awe-inspiring contributions in such a variety of fields. It is an especial honour to be on the same list as the late Professor Marie Sanderson, the

first woman professor in Canadian geography, and first female president of the Canadian Association of Geographers, whom I was only fortunate enough to meet once, at the founding meeting of the Canadian Women and Geography study group of the CAG back in 1982. Likewise, I feel most honoured to be in the company of the late Trudi Bunting, who was amazingly supportive of emerging scholars as well as a major contributor to institutionalizing teaching about the Canadianness of Canadian Cities.

During my undergraduate studies in geography and urban studies at Sussex University in the UK I had developed a strong interest in housing policy issues and in the drivers of social injustice within cities, but I lacked a solid theoretical framing. My time at U of T coincided with the rise of critical neo-marxist perspectives in urban studies, which offered ways to conceptualize the role of the state in shaping both urban economies and key aspects of everyday urban social geographies. And so a group of us took a course on the "urban land question" at the Urban Planning Department (then fully distinct from Geography) taught by Professors Allen J. Scott and Shoukry Roweis.

(continued on page 10)

CWAG, THE CAG AND THE CAG'S AWARD FOR SCHOLARLY DISTINCTION IN GEOGRAPHY

CWAG members recently wrote to the CAG President, Dr. Sanjay Nepal, about the CAG's seriously inequitable award system, particularly the Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography. We were heartened by his recent comments in one of his columns in the CAG newsletter (25 (2)) in which he stated that there are "four perspectives central to how we conduct CAG affairs: 1) Diversity, 2) Inclusivity, 3) Equity, and 4) Connectivity", and that "Equity refers to making CAG resources available to all its members equitably". We felt that he would take our concerns seriously.

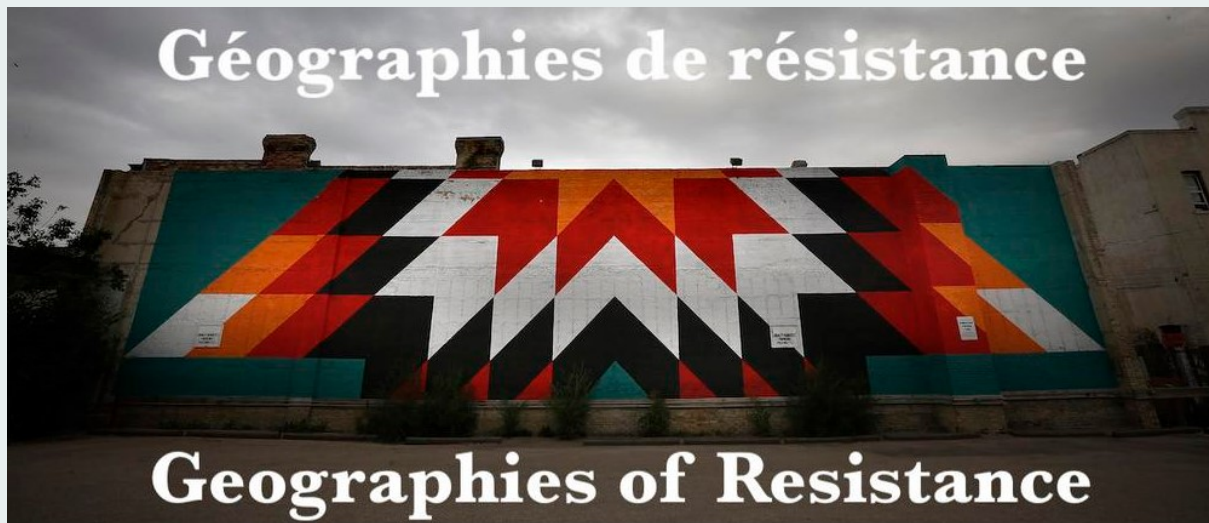
The Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography has been awarded since 1997 (to 2018). It has been awarded 26 times. Only once has it been awarded to a woman. And it is overwhelmingly white men who have been the beneficiaries of this award. CWAG knows that women have applied for this award, women scholars in Geography with international reputations for their scholarship who are more than deserving. What message does this send to female (and male) CAG members and beyond about the academic status of the CAG in the early 21st century? It appears that the CAG is operating as a patriarchal and racist 19th century institution in terms of whom it thinks is a legitimate scholar. Is the CAG saying that there are no women scholars or scholars of colour who are worthy of winning an award? Women and people of colour do not form a minuscule percentage of the CAG membership. We wonder how white male members of the CAG would feel if over the last 26 years the award had only once gone to one of them. They would be up in arms, recognizing the total unfairness of such a system. But when lack of recognition pertains to women or people of colour there is not a murmur.

We are not saying that the awardees have not been worthy recipients. But they are

all men (bar one, Gerry Pratt), and a narrow band of men at that. A quarter of a century is long enough for the CAG to have been doing things badly. It needs to stop. We do not want to embarrass the CAG on a public stage (the CAG is already doing a very good job of embarrassing itself) but neither do we accept that we can continue as if this situation is acceptable, because it is not. We would like the CAG to admit as soon as possible that the errors of the past will not be continued, to publicly apologize for the fact that it has failed to take into account the accomplishments of a large number of its members, and that a set of operational guidelines that take diversity and equity into account will be drawn up for all committees and will be in operation before the 2019 awards, with special consideration as to how it will compensate women scholars and scholars of colour for its biased practices in relation to the Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography. If the CAG is to remain a vibrant association it needs to recognize that it cannot go into 2019 repeating its current inequitable practice of recognizing and rewarding scholarship and demonstrate that it is capable of rewarding the outstanding contributions of all of its members and that awardees start to reflect the composition of its membership in terms of gender and race.

We have heard back from Dr. Nepal who agrees with our observations about the historical inequality in recognizing female scholars in geography (although he did not comment on our concerns about the whiteness of the award winners). He has agreed to draw the nominating committee's attention to this issue and will also ask the committee to re-examine the criteria and CAG operational practices and if necessary, he will set up a task force

(Continued on the page 10)



CAG ANNUAL MEETING
MAY 27, 2019 - MAY 31, 2019
The University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, MB

The central theme of the conference is Geographies of Resistance, which based on the anniversary of two local events that have shaped Canadian history and geography. The year 2019 will mark 150 years since the 1869 Red River Rebellion, the Métis resistance which led to the creation of the Province of Manitoba and shaped the evolution of Indigenous rights. It is also the centenary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, the labour protest that revealed deep divisions in Canada and fostered the development of unionism and social welfare. In 2019, we can consider these events alongside contemporary struggles for social justice in Canada and around the world. Therefore, the theme of the upcoming conference in Winnipeg will be ‘Geographies of Resistance.’

CAG EVENT: KATHERENA VERMETTE



CWAG hopes to see you at the fabulous event we are co-sponsoring with the Indigenous Peoples Working Group of the CAG (Co-Chairs Gail Fondahl and Catherine Nolin have taken the lead on the successful proposal to the CAG for this event, as well as organizing). We will promote it and hope to help fill the amazing social space that has been chosen “off campus” for the event.

The event will be a moderated discussion with Canadian writer Katherena Vermette (and Sarah deLeuw), **from 5-7pm, on Thursday May 30th, at the Good Will Social Club.**

Katherena Vermette is a Métis writer from Treaty One territory, the heart of the Métis nation, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Her first book, *North End Love Songs*, won the Governor General’s Literary Award for Poetry and her novel, *The Break*, was bestseller in Canada and won multiple awards, including the 2017 Amazon.ca First Novel Award. Ms. Vermette will share from her award-winning works set in Winnipeg that grapple with issues of Indigenous, gendered and urban identities.

(Continued from page 7)

But I was also studying urban historical geography with Professor Jim Lemon—who would become my supervisor and whose patience for ‘big theory’ was minimal—and, also, the phenomenology of urban landscapes course with Professor Ted Relph, a pioneer of humanistic approaches in urban geography. (My term paper for Ted’s class ended up in a course manual for Deakin University in Australia! So thank you Ted for getting me my first ever academic publication!)

Fast-forward to a few years ago. One of the greatest compliments that I have ever received from a fellow academic is that, in the context of collaborative team projects involving comparative work case across different Canadian cities, I was “always the one with the best grasp of the details of data, but also contributed to defining/understanding the ‘big picture’ while remaining independent of any particular theoretical orthodoxy”. With all the perils of hindsight, I really think that this skill-set was forged during my time at UofT in the creative tensions between the different substantive and epistemological orientations to which my peers and I were exposed. We debated these as much outside as inside the classroom, in non-hierarchical and collaborative exchanges—informal seminars and reading groups. Professor Gunter Gad, who was also a member of my supervisory committee,

was also a major participant in these discussions.

When I think of that amazing group of fellow students in my cohort, two of my closest friends did not live long enough to even be considered for one of these awards, and I’d like us to remember them. Suzanne Mackenzie, who we lost 20 years ago, was the pioneer of feminist urban geography in Canada. Suzanne also initiated, within the U of T geography department, a fruitful dialogue between feminist and humanistic perspectives. Katherine Willson left us just over a year ago, only 2 years after her retirement from a stellar, though discreet, career in the Ontario Public Service. Both were major influences on my ways of seeing the city and both gave unceasing encouragement to my protracted efforts to get permanent residence in Canada.

Finally, I want us to remember Zehra Alpar. She was the ultimate sympathetic ear and helped me get through several moments of doubt as well as being incredibly efficient in the administrative aspects of her work as graduate student advisor.

Thank you again so much for this great honour—and for your patience listening to this little contribution to institutional memory building.

*Damaris Rose
November 2, 2018*

(Continued from page 8)

to look into this matter. This is all very encouraging...as a start. We need to continue to apply pressure to the CAG to ensure that this is not a matter that is dealt with ‘below stairs’. We hope to mount a session at the CAG in Winnipeg for CWAG members to determine a set of

procedures we can adopt to address how we continue to respond to this issue and how we propose lists of people to nominate across various CAG, AAG, and other awards. Stay tuned!

Linda Peake