

CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography Dr Graeme Wynn

(Le texte original anglais n'a pas été traduit pour respecter les propos de l'auteur.)



Graeme Wynn is a historical geographer and environmental historian of world renown, who in a career spanning almost forty years has made formative contributions to the study of forest exploitation, conservation, and management; histories of migration and settlement; and the intersections of environment and empire. He has been a pioneer in the interdisciplinary field of environmental history, in which his contributions—from **Timber Colony** in 1981 through to **Canada and Arctic North America** in 2007—have been associated with distinctive and wide-ranging impacts. These remarkable achievements in research, have not come at the expense of teaching, service, and administration: Wynn has demonstrated an unstinting commitment to undergraduate teaching and graduate-student mentoring, and he has provided exemplary academic leadership, serving for six years as Associate Dean of Arts and then, for eight of the past 12 years, as Head of UBC's Department of Geography.

Timber Colony, Wynn's first book, examined the impact of commercial capital in the form of the timber trade on the environment and society of early New Brunswick. It was, and remains, a strikingly original work. For Harold Innis, still Canada's premier economic historian, the timber industry was a major staple trade, but neither Innis nor his successors described, as Wynn did, the trade's spatial economy, the relationship between that economy and the organization of settler society, and the impact of the trade on the environment. Wynn's work on **Timber Colony** gave him an abiding affection for Maritime Canada, a region to which he devoted much subsequent attention. Some of his many essays and articles on the region are detailed investigations of particular topics, others are broad syntheses that capture aspects of the entire region. Wynn ranges easily from meticulous reconstructions of patterns of settlement and of rural social hierarchies, to essays on the human geography of the Maritimes at particular times, to thoughtful reflections about regional ideology, society, and landscape.

He taught for a time in New Zealand, returns there frequently, and has made distinctive contributions to the study of forest policy, conservation, and immigration in New Zealand. And, having taught for many years at the University of British Columbia, he is now a central figure in British Columbian scholarship, partly for his essays on early Vancouver and for his summations of the state of research on early modern British Columbia, but principally as a consummate editor and research supervisor. With climatologist Tim Oke, he edited the widely used and influential volume, **Vancouver and its Region**; he has edited a special double issue on the environment for the journal **BC Studies**; he edits a series of environmental histories for UBC Press, and he has played leadership and mentoring roles for most of the scholarship in historical geography and environmental history in the province.

His most recent book, **Canada and Arctic North America: An Environmental History**, describes and interprets the changing material environment of half a continent over some 10,000 years. The culmination of Wynn's career to date, it is a rare combination of work, creativity, and courage, and will be the standard reference for interdisciplinary work on the environmental history of Canada and Alaska for years to come.

Beyond all this, Wynn's voluminous writings include a series of essays on current developments and trends in historical geography, environmental history, and geography. His is a synthesizing and integrative view of geography as a field involved with past and present, with people and land in their myriad imbrications, with cognate disciplines, and, above all, a field in which physical and human geography are in some real contact with each other. In these respects, his roots as a geographer have far more to do with Sauer than with Hartshorne. His superb administration of the geography department at UBC during most of the last decade has this underlying intellectual agenda, and is yielding a crop of brilliant young appointees in physical and human geography who enjoy their common geographical home. This too is among Graeme Wynn's singular academic achievements.

In sum, Graeme Wynn is an enormously competent, committed, and versatile geographer, an example of what an informed geographical mind is capable.