

CAG President's Report 2024

This second year as President has been one of smooth sailing and bringing to term different projects and planning. The Executive Assistant, Philip Thibault, has also completed another full year cycle and feels much more comfortable to do his tasks. His efficiency and readiness to help and assist are truly worth mentioning. I appreciate the fact of being able to work in my mother tongue with Philip who is perfectly bilingual. I wish this comes as a condition for hiring any future employee of the CAG. Bilingualism truly makes a difference for the CAG members and, as I walk slowly towards the end of my term, I wish an institutional memory stays of being inclusive and welcoming for all Canadian geographers.

The Vice-President, Susan Elliott, has completed a year of service and is now fully prepared to assume the role of President in August. I am pleased to know that the CAG will be in such capable hands. Derrek Erberts has also been learning and completing duties as the new CAG Secretary Treasurer. He is helping the executive making sound choices for the sustainability of the organization. Congratulations to Derrek who has been appointed as the Dean of Luther College at the University of Regina! The CAG Board of Directors has also got to know each other more and feel safer to exchange ideas and participate in the 5 annual meetings that it now holds, contrarily to the previous 2 when I first sat on the board. This change is attributable namely to the passage to online meetings which allows for more flexibility for meetings, and many savings on travel allocation as well. The democratic life of the CAG has made considerable gains since then!

On the other hand, we were very happy with a gradual return to face-to-face model when the 73rd CAG annual conference took place at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), from May 8 to 12 2023 with a total of 256 attendees. Over 80 sessions were held throughout the week, including keynotes and an excursion on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. The option for a single-day pass was reintroduced close to the end of the registration period and has been fully integrated for this year's conference. The Ontario Division (CAGONT) held an in-person conference from October 27 – 28, 2023 at Toronto Metropolitan University. The Division has also been considering the idea of planning an undergrad symposium to generate more student interest in the CAG Annual Conference. The Western Division (WCAG) held its annual conference in Okanagan College, Kelowna, from March 15 – 16.

Other regional divisions' meetings were held online, such as the Regroupement des Géographes du Québec's (RGQ) in November 2023—which also holds webinars throughout the year; and the Atlantic Division (ACAG) on November 2 – 3, 2023. For the Prairie division (PCAG), the last regional meeting was hosted in 2019, but it is resurging under new leadership and has confirmed its next meeting planned for September 2024.

After recent delays with its journal, a new issue of *Prairie Perspectives* was released this past April 2024.

The Atlantic Division is working with the Local Organizing Committee at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) for the planning of the 2024 CAG Annual Conference. One goal ACAG is trying to achieve with virtual meetings is to consciously make gatherings as inclusive and equitable as possible. It made the decision to make all meetings virtual for the foreseeable future due to the geographical dispersion of Atlantic Canada members and the costs associated for faculty and students to travel and attend annual meetings.

Communications and affiliations:

Thanks to the work of our executive assistant, Philip, we manage to maintain frequent and regular contact with our members: our website is regularly updated, 21 issues from *Geognews* have been released and the *CAGlist* continues to keep our members informed of the latest news concerning our geographical community. Two newsletters were sent in the past year and the directory is also kept up to date. With the help of its new social media coordinator, graduate student from the University of Waterloo Satveer Dhillon, the CAG has upgraded its social media presence to better serve its members. Among some of the focal actions undertaken by Satveer are promoting important calendar dates for the Earth's sustainability, featuring profiles of Canadian geographers, and posting filmed or written interviews presenting CAG councilors' inspiring career paths. We now have 165 followers on Instagram and last fall that number was 51. To further improve our presence on social media, we strongly encourage all our executive members to follow our accounts on Instagram, Facebook and X (previously known as Twitter). If you have any suggestions for our social media platforms, please email Philip at info@cag-acg.ca.

We are pleased to see that social media have enabled students to connect with each other and share their contributions.

The annual meeting with the national departmental chairs was organized virtually this past February by the President and Vice-president to present them with the new developments at the CAG, to hear their concerns and to invite them to share their successes with us. The presence of a total of 37 heads of departmental units was recorded. A French edition followed. We thank them for taking the time for this important online meeting. Arn Keeling, Chair of the CAG2024 Local Organizing Committee (LOC) and chair of the Department of Geography at MUN, sat on both meetings to provide an update regarding the planning of the 2024 CAG Conference.

Study group governance is still a pending subject that requires insightful studying. A survey has been conducted in 2023 by Councilor Chantal Déry and French student representative Leena Lamontagne-Dupuis but we are still awaiting the conclusion of their report. The

study group governance will thereafter be incorporated within the governance committee to ensure follow up since relevant points addressed in the survey deal with the CAG broader governance.

The CAG is part of the constellation of Canadian learned associations and is a member of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) (the CAG President being its representative). Although it has been several years since the CAG convention has been co-hosted with FHSS, our membership dues allow the association to be represented in FHSS advocacy activities and to lobby the federal government for increased funding for postsecondary research. Finally, our affiliation with the International Geographical Union (IGU) was renewed this year thanks to the continued support of the National Research Council of Canada.

In the winter of 2024, the CAG became an institutional supporter of the Jena Declaration for the Culture of Sustainability by UNESCO which emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity and creativity as central elements for achieving global sustainability. The Jena Declaration asserts that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved by merely intensifying the use of existing methods and strategies. For a global transformation towards sustainability, a fundamental strategic change is indispensable, emphasizing an approach based on the collective power of millions of citizens and local communities worldwide, as well as the integrative perspective of the social sciences and the arts. It highlights that understanding humanity as an integral part of nature and valuing cultural diversity are essential for fostering sustainable futures. This declaration calls for the integration of artists and cultural diversity into global sustainability efforts.

For more detailed information, you can consult the Jena Declaration website (<https://www.thejenadeclaration.org/>).

News at the CAG:

The motion voted at the last AGM to increase membership fees by 5%, with the exemption of Student and Post-doc categories was approved and took effect as of January 1, 2024.

Elections were held for the Francophone Student Councilor position and for the two (2) available Councilor positions. The only candidate for the Student Councilor position, Yvon Guerrier, was acclaimed and the two new elect CAG Councilors are Jaimy Fischer and Jenna Dixon. The executive welcomes its new members!

The continuation of the work of the 3 CAG committees—two of which have become formalized while the other is still being informal—has been carried out to the great satisfaction of their members. A fourth committee, the Governance committee, was also

formed to study and streamline governing structure of the association. Here they are in summary:

- 1) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee: awareness of the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity has been made possible thanks to several groups of CAG members, including FIGS (Feminist Intersectional Solidarity Group) and student members. The work of the EDI committee has been assisted by the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the latter offering support for follow-up and a model of good practices developed by the various Canadian associations it represents. Under the responsibility of Councilor Sinead Early, the new EDI Standing Committee has now its terms of Reference (ToR) and has worked on various issues such as: developing a training toolkit, working on building an action plan, developing links with the CAG Governance Committee to help redevelop the CAG Governance structure, and exploring accessibility in digital media more in depth. The EDI toolkit proposes a process rollout for all Executive members to complete the list of training on an annual basis after the Annual Conference. The resources provided in the training toolkit are mostly free or open access. The approach of this process allows for Executive members to develop their own strategy to educate themselves on EDI matters and ownership on addressing EDI issues they may be unfamiliar with.
- 2) Decolonization and Indigenization (DI) Committee: Great strides have been made under the leadership of Councilor Heather Castleden and the committee has been formalized with regular bylaws and officers. The D&I Committee held several meetings over the year and was successful in acquiring a grant from CFHSS to help funding honoraria of Knowledge Keepers who participate to its meetings. A D&I Survey is being developed with the input of the Knowledge Keepers with the purpose of creating safe and inclusive space in the CAG. The D&I Committee assisted with the review of the Conference Manual from a D&I scope. Councilors Heather Castleden and Deondre Smiles are in contact with Arn Keeling and the LOC at MUN to support Indigenous presence at the upcoming Conference and to organize sponsored sessions on Indigenous Geography. The D&I Committee has been continuously updating resources on the website and has been planning a call for papers for a special section with the *Canadian Geographies* Journal.
- 3) Membership committee: the survey conducted in 2022 among members still guide our actions to this day. The committee has workshopped some ideas and is planning to present them at the upcoming AGM and broaden the discussion on other methods of meeting and engaging the membership. Craig Coburn, the committee chair, emphasized the committee's commitment to enhancing inclusivity by uniting human and physical geographers and developing a mentorship program. Deliberations are ongoing on how to maximize membership

value for the fees paid, including the establishment of an institutional membership option.

- 4) The governance committee: CAG Constitution review. Vice-President Susan Elliott addressed the issue that the terms used in Bylaws and Constitution are not consistent, and would likely request permission to open the Constitution, so that the Committee can address these changes. No new updates otherwise. Meetings shall start again soon.

I would like to thank all those who took part in these innovative actions which allow the CAG to present itself as a community of geographers practicing continuous improvement.

CAG Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors is made up of 12 members, including the President, the Vice-President (or past President), the Secretary-Treasurer, 4 councilors and 5 representatives of regional divisions, in addition to 2 student representatives, French- and English-speaking respectively. The CAG Board of Directors expressed the wish last year to recruit an Indigenous student representative; its research continues in this direction.

The Board of Directors has met four times since the 2023 annual meeting, in July and October 2023, and in February and May 2024. The virtual mode was retained for holding the Board of Directors meetings, the clear advantage being the possibility of bringing together greater numbers and limiting the pressures on the members of the board during the annual meeting. Only the Annual General Meeting remains face-to-face, but Board members will have the opportunity to participate virtually (this privilege is granted only to members of the CAG Executive Committee).

The CAG journal:

The past year was the first year since the journal name change and rebranding in April 2023 to become *Canadian Geographies/Les géographies canadiennes* and it also marked the beginning of the new editor-in-chief's term, Dr. Agnieszka Leszczynski, professor at the Department of Geography at Western University. Soon followed the appointment of a new, diverse Editorial board. Over the past twelve years, former editor-in-chief Dr. Nadine Schuurman has built a successful editorial team and made major changes in operations and editorial approach that have allowed the journal to remain dynamic, up to date with changes in publishing practices and technologies, and competitive across various measures of impact and influence. We are very grateful for the vision and leadership that Nadine has brought to our journal over all these years.

Online publishing with Open Access has been made easier due to the signing of a Transformational Agreement between *the Canadian Research Knowledge Network / Réseau canadien de documentation pour la recherche (CKRN/RCDR)* and Wiley in January 2023. This agreement gives corresponding authors at *CKRN/RCDR* member institutions (essentially all post-secondary research institutions in Canada) the ability to “publish their articles as open access in all of Wiley’s hybrid journals for the duration of the agreement” (CKRN 2024 in Editor-in-Chief’s 2024 report: 3). Indeed, in 2023, all but one articles of the 26 published as hybrid open access in the *Canadian Geographies* were published OA under this Transformational Agreement (Ibid.).

I will also highlight the efforts put forward by the French-language editor, Dr. Martin Simard, professor at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, to make the experience of French-speaking authors publishing in the journal more inclusive and attractive. The June issue contains a special section dedicated to the Quebec geography in French guest edited by Martin Simard alongside Raphaël Pelletier. The editorial team is eager to receive more proposals for special sections from the CAG members.

The book review editor, Nalini Mohabir has accomplished important work for the journal but has accepted new challenges. She gave a 10-month notice this past Spring. A replacement has been found. We thank her for her continuous readiness to work and the quality of her assistance.

CAG Awards:

Vice-President Susan Elliott brought up the idea of implementing a new mentorship award for the CAG. She proposed to the Executive to consider naming it after Professor Eric Crighton from Ottawa U facing a fatal diagnosis. Colleagues of this Professor have come forward requesting that the CAG create an award in his name. Susan has received a prospectus and a number of testimonials to support the award.

At the CAG Annual General Meeting in 2023, the following awards were presented:

- **The Prize for Scholarly Distinction in Geography:** Dr. Christopher Burn
- **The Prize for Excellence in Teaching Geography:** Dr. Shannon Fargey
- **The Julian M. Szeicz Early Career Achievement Award:** Dr. Rachel Herron
- **The Starkey-Robinson Award for Graduate Research on Canada:** Dr. Farzam Fatolazadeh and Dr. Justine Townsend, ex æquo
- **The Robin P. Armstrong Memorial Scholarship for Native Studies:** Dr. Michael Fabris
- **The Award for Geography in the Service of Government or Business:** Mr. Jean-Yves Lalonde.

Congratulations to all the awardees! You make geography shine in Canada and around the world!

Upcoming conferences:

CAG

It is with great enthusiasm that the CAG team prepares to celebrate its next in person main annual activity in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, at MUN from August 14 to 18th. Several hotels in the area are fully booked on the occasion, so don't delay reserving your place! MUN offers new on-campus residences that make a stay more affordable. Many fieldtrips in the area are offered on the last day of the conference, this is an amazing way to know the local people and their territory.

CAG 2024 - in presential, set to meet from August 14-18 in St. John’s at MUN.

CAG 2025 - in presential, Carleton University, Ottawa.

CAG 2026 - in presential, University of Victoria, Victoria.

CAG 2027 - We are currently looking for a host.

Regional Divisions

Atlantic Division (ACAG) – dates to be determined

Regroupement des géographes du Québec (RGQ) – November 2024, at the Université du Québec à Rimouski (UQAR)

Ontario Division (CAGONT) – November 2024, at Toronto Metropolitan University

Prairie Division (PCAG) – An in-person Conference for September 2024 is planned in Grand Forks, at the University of North Dakota.

West Division (WDCAG) – dates to be determined

Membership data:

The most recent membership data is shown in Table 1, with corresponding numbers since the year 2012 for comparison.

Tableau 1: Evolution of CAG Membership – 2012 to 2023

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*	2019*	2020*	2021*	2022*	2023*
Regular Members	437	426	381	346	285	253	201	297	227	289	266	254
Student Members	378	332	329	390	274	341	239	322	237	293	238	237
Other	280	265	284	293	313	280	137	85	69	102	90	103
Total	1095	1023	994	1029	872	874	577	704	533	684	594	594

*Excludes complimentary members (e.g., honorary past presidents, undergraduate award winners), but includes affiliate members (AAG & RGS-IBG).

CAG membership totals for 2023 remained unchanged, with minor fluctuations in each membership category as seen in the table above. We have noted a challenge in retaining Student members beyond graduation, opting not to enroll into other membership categories. However, we remain optimistic in returning to pre-pandemic figures and are taking the necessary steps to get there. In the last year we have re-formed the CAG Membership committee to address needs and improve the member experience. The CAG is also confident that the return to normalcy and in-person Conference settings will reignite interest and passion in the geography community.

Concluding remarks

As my second year as President draws to a close, I look forward to passing the torch to Vice-President Susan Elliott who will continue guiding the changes that have already begun, in continuing serving CAG members in the best possible way. The wind of renewal that began to blow under the presidency of Neil Hanlon continues to motivate us as an association and encourages us to surpass ourselves. The basics of the CAG have been revisited, clarified and reaffirmed, making it a more inclusive association and grateful for the contribution of all its members in their beautiful diversity that composes it.

At the next Annual General Meeting, part of the Board of Directors will be renewed. I take this opportunity to thank our two Councilors, Heather Castleden and Sinead Earley, and Francophone Student Representative, Leena Lamontagne-Dupuis for their dedicated work with the CAG. Finally, a big thank you to all members and I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual meeting later this summer!

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