

President's Report

by Susan J. Elliott

This is my first report as President of the CAG. First, let me say it is an absolute honour to serve the organization that I call my academic home. Second, I want to share that it would NOT be possible without the amazing staff support received from Phil Thibault, our amazing Executive Assistant. When you see him around at the CAG meetings at Carleton, please shake his hand and thank him and buy him a coffee and tell him how much he's appreciated! Third, thank you so so much to our executive members, Past President Dr. Nathalie Gravel and our – can I just say it again? Amazing! – treasurer Derrek Eberts. And thanks also to our outstanding (and still new!) Editor in Chief of Canadian Geographies, Dr. Agnieszka Leszczynski from Western University. And last but certainly not least our outstanding board members who take on the task of actually doing the work of the organization – contributing to conferences, policies, procedures, and our principles of equity, diversity and justice.

You will note that in that above opening paragraph, I did not thank myself. One of the first learnings for me about the organization is that – well – being the President is a lot of work and like all of our Board members, it's a volunteer position and I feel like I have not done and/or accomplished even a fraction of what I wanted to in the past year. Having said that, I am truly grateful that I have another year in this role and that having found my footing a little bit, the to do list should become shorter. In that vein, please let me thank – again, Past President Nathalie Gravel; Nathalie – I never knew. And now I do. And I just want to say thank you again.

As noted above, this is my first report as President and so in these situations, what does one do? One looks at the reports written by our predecessors to get inspired – and I came across a report written by my good friend Neil Hanlon. In that report, Neil reported on the difficult times we had lived through in the context of the pandemic: the remote teaching, the cancellation of field seasons, the postponing of conferences – and the related tolls that took on us as individuals and as organizations. Thank you, Neil for your service to the organization. I am very fortunate in my current role to be coming off an amazing conference at Memorial last year, and looking forward in a couple of weeks to the in-person meeting at Carleton where we will have record numbers of participants. We also, as an organization, are in a position financially to invest in ourselves and those proposals for investments will come forward at the AGM at the conference so do please join and have your say.

This doesn't mean that all is well in our world and the world around us. As I write this, it is May 5th – a day we recognize in Canada as Red Dress Day – a day to remember and honour the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people. Acute civil unrest, outright war, and heartbreaking tragedies continue to exist globally. We work – as individuals within this organization as well as through our organization – to discern what are the right steps, what is the correct path, to do what we can to ease the burdens of others – through what we teach

in our classrooms, what we research in the world, what we disseminate to our academic colleagues and to the broader world. Let us continue on that path.

Stay connected, build networks, built the capacity of others, and give back

The CAG continues to make use of a range of e-media. We continue to produce 21 issues of GeogNews per year that are distributed via the CAGlist. We have a social media presence through our Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky and LinkedIn accounts. Make sure you follow, like and share! Also, if you would like to have something posted reach out to our social media coordinator through info@cag-acg.ca – have a new paper published? A new PhD student with a scholarship? A conference you're planning?

In addition to these many channels of communication, the CAG maintains formal ties with partner organizations that help us promote geographical scholarship within and beyond Canada. We are represented at the table of the Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences, meeting at Georgian College MAY 30 – JUNE 6, 2025. I will be attending some of the Congress on behalf of the organization. We are also, with support from the National Research Council of Canada, a member of the International Geographical Union (IGU). The IGU 36th International Geographical Congress will be held in July 2028 in Melbourne.

Canadian Geographies:

Our team continues to meet regularly with our publisher Wiley and all is well! Again, so much thanks to our EIC - Agnieszka Leszczynski – and if you want to hear all the details, come to the AGM at Carleton!

Awards:

The 2025 CAG Awards will be presented at the opening reception of the 75th Annual Conference of the CAG. 2025 will mark the inaugural presentation of the Eric Crighton Mentorship Award. This year Awards will be issued for the following categories:

- ï **The Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography**
- ï **The Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography**
- ï **The Award for Service to the Profession of Geography**
- ï **The President's Award for Outstanding Service to the CAG**
- ï **The Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement**
- ï **The Eric Crighton Mentorship Award**
- ï **The Starkey-Robinson Award for Graduate Research on Canada**
- ï **The Robin P. Armstrong Memorial Prize for Excellence in Indigenous Studies**

Upcoming Conferences:

CAG

CAG 2025 – Carleton University, May 20 – 23

CAG 2026 – University of Victoria (TBD)

CAG 2027 – York University (TBD)

Regional Divisions

Prairie Division (PCAG) – Elkhorn Resort & Conference Centre, Manitoba, October 17-19, 2025

Regroupement des géographes du Québec (RGQ) – virtual, November 2025

Membership data:

The most recent membership numbers are presented in Table 1, with corresponding figures dating back to 2015 for comparative purposes.

Table 1: CAG Membership – 2015 to 2024

	2015	2016	2017	2018*	2019*	2020*	2021*	2022*	2023*	2024*
Regular Members	346	285	253	201	297	227	289	266	254	247
Student Members	390	274	341	239	322	237	293	238	237	243
Other	293	313	280	137	85	69	102	90	103	89
Total	1029	872	874	577	704	533	684	594	594	579

*Excludes complementary members, but includes affiliate members (AAG & RGS-IBG)

At first glance, the more recent figures look unsettling, and they are certainly a cause for concern. We should bear in mind, however, that the recent downturn in membership is largely a reflection of exceptional circumstances. In 2018, we held our meeting in conjunction with the IGU, and the CAG was unable to offer a registration discount to our members. We expected this would result in a dip in the 2018 membership (which it did) and anticipated that it may take two or three years to recover. The figures in 2019 suggested that a recovery was on track, but then COVID-19 struck and we had to cancel our annual conference. In spite of this, we remain optimistic as we reinvigorate our conference, and re-invest in our organization. The Board will be looking also to reinvigorate a membership committee to clarify and raise awareness of the benefits of membership.

Concluding comments:

Current geopolitics being what they are, we are – as an organization – acutely aware of what it means to be in the academy as faculty, staff and/or student. We cherish our academic freedom and the contributions we make with our work. Let's come together, work together, share together, and revitalize together for the greater good.