

**Canadian Association of Geographers  
Report of the President – Sanjay K. Nepal  
2018-2019**

Following the many successes achieved during 2017-2018, the 2018-2019 year has been a period of taking some concrete actions proposed in the preceding year. The CAG activities during the past year have focused on serving the needs of CAG members, and promoting the relevance and importance of the discipline of geography and of geographers to the public. This report summarizes key activities of the CAG in 2018 with respect to these objectives, and offers some personal reflections on future directions.

**2018 CAG Annual Meeting:**

The CAG Annual Meeting (August 6-10, 2018), hosted by Laval University, was held in conjunction with the International Geographical Union (IGU), and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). The fully bilingual conference was conducted in Canada's two official languages (English and French) and featured 12 keynote speakers. It was the first time that an IGU conference was held in North America in more than 25 years (Washington, DC, 1992) and the first time in more than 45 years in Canada (Montreal, 1972). With some 1,300 participants, among which 422 were Canadians, it was easily the largest geographic gathering in the history of Canada, with over 200 sessions and workshops, as well as three full-day poster sessions. The theme of the conference, "Appreciating Difference / Apprécier la différence," encouraged participants to recognize the importance of interpreting our world in all its diversity. A unique aspect of this joint meeting was the presence of the NCGE, giving K to 12 Education a prominent place at the event. Preceding the IGU-CAG-NCGE meeting was the 15th International Geography Olympiad (iGeo), held from July 31 to August 6, 2018. There was a near-record breaking attendance of 40 countries and 43 teams, and an overall budget of over \$260,000 CAD for this event. It was inspiring to observe the world's best geography students compete for gold medals that were awarded at the Quebec City Convention Centre by IGU president Yukio Himiyama (Japan), former CAG President Dan Shrubsole, and NCGE president Audrey Mohan (USA).

While the IGU-CAG-NCGE event was a resounding success, based on the number of events held, delegates, luminary speakers, youth involvement, etc., there remained some issues that need to be considered if CAG considers holding large joint gatherings in the future. The software application that was used in events programming in Quebec City was problematic (many, including myself, found the program confusing and not very user-friendly), and CAG did not receive its standard levy due to financial issues, which were beyond the controls of the CAG and the local organizing committee.

**Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences (CFES), Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS), and the International Geographical Union (IGU)**

Mary-Louise Byrne (Wilfrid Laurier University) continues to represent the CAG on the [Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences](#) (CFES). She attended the CFES Council and Annual General Meeting in April (12-13, 2019) in Ottawa. Please refer to her report for further details.

I represent the CAG on the [Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences](#) (CFHSS). There are new leaders at the CFHSS. The outgoing CFHSS President is Guy Laforest and the current Executive Director is Gabriel Miller. The incoming President is Patrizia Albanese (Ryerson University) who took

over the CFHSS as of May 15, 2019. This year, the CFHSS decided to hold its Annual Meeting online only. The virtual meeting was held May 15, 2019 (2:00 - 3:00 pm). At the meeting, three new association members (Canadian Association for American Studies, Canadian Association of Law Teachers, Canadian Society for the Study of Comics), and two institution members (École des Hautes Études Commerciales, Polytechnique Montréal) were approved. Three member engagement forums will be held at the Congress in June 2019 in Vancouver. Unfortunately, I can't be present there, but hopefully I will have the opportunity to connect with the new President sometime soon.

The CAG has not joined Congress meetings in the past few years. As stated in the 2017-18 President's Report, the CAG seeks to improve partnership with CFHSS on multiple fronts including making sure CAG has a voice in determining the Congress theme and the selection of plenary and luminary speakers, better coordinating the scheduling of events, and a new financial arrangement that would see a more reasonable registration rate for CAG/Congress delegates and revenue sharing model. As for the latter, CAG now pays CFHSS dues only for those members who reside in Canada and might benefit from CFHSS activities (excluding physical geographers, members of the Canadian Geomorphology Research Group, and half of members of the GIS study group). As a result, we now pay reduced association dues of \$3,445.17 (2019). This amount was \$4,263.03 in 2017, before the change, a net reduction of \$817.86. As we move forward, we should reconsider how we want to engage with the CFHSS. To this end, broader consultations with CAG members would be necessary. The feedback from CAG members would form the basis for our future engagement with CFHSS.

Canada is a voting member (one vote) of the [International Geographical Union](#). The National Research Council (NRC) pays CAG dues to the IGU on behalf of the Government of Canada through the Grants to International Affiliations Program. This implies that all CAG members are also IGU members by default. Continuation of the NRC support requires the CAG to submit an annual report of international activities to the NRC. This report was submitted in February 2019. On behalf of the CAG, the NRC has paid the 2019 annual dues (\$4,500) to the IGU. I expect the CAG to continue to be engaged with the IGU in the coming years.

### **CAG Awards**

At the CAG Annual Meeting in Quebec City, the following CAG Awards were presented:

- CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography: Daniel Scott, University of Waterloo
- CAG Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography: Alana Boland, University of Toronto (St. George)
- The Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement: Jennifer Korosi, York University
- The Starkey-Robinson Award for Graduate Research on Canada: Vincent Lecours, Memorial University
- The Robin P. Armstrong Memorial Prize for Excellence in Indigenous Studies: Erica Oberndorfer
- The President's Award for Outstanding Service to the Canadian Association of Geographers: Matthew Hatvany, Marie-Pierre Guy-Dorion, Lynn Moorman, Beth Dye, Maxwell Bouchard

### **Membership**

The table below indicates that the membership numbers are declining over time. They were particularly low in 2018 due to the arrangement made with the IGU-CAG-NCGE local organizing committee that

registration to the conference would include a CAG membership. This meant that membership renewal for 2018 was not necessary. Regardless, the declining number of regular members, particularly since 2014, is a major concern. Please refer to the final section of this report for further reflections on this and other related issues.

**Table 1: CAG Membership – 2010 to 2018**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018*</b>
Regular Members	429	377	437	426	381	346	285	253	201
Student Members	362	339	378	332	329	390	274	341	239
Other	230	260	280	265	284	293	313	280	137
<b>Total</b>	<b>1021</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1095</b>	<b>1023</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>577</b>

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

### **Study Group Grants and Governance**

Currently, the CAG has 15 study groups. Some groups have been more active than others. In order to ensure study groups remain vibrant and engage with the broader CAG audience, a special funding program (\$15,000) was approved in 2018. The purpose of this funding is to support CAG study groups to launch new initiatives, organize special events, invite speakers of global reputation, or similar efforts, with the goal of making the study group(s) relevant, and the CAG Annual Meeting successful. We received three proposals, and funded two of them. The winning proposals were submitted by the Historical Geography SG, and jointly by the Canadian Women and Geography SG and Indigenous Peoples Working Group. As a result of their successes, these three study groups are hosting or co-hosting special events at this year's annual meeting.

We are also exploring study group governance structures to make sure study group members remain actively engaged. Based on my preliminary exploration both within CAG Study Groups and AAG Specialty Groups, it appears a minimum three-person Study Group committee would be desirable. This committee may consist of a Chair (or in special circumstances Co-Chairs), a treasurer, and a student representative. As far as guidance concerning the possibility of dissolution of inactive study groups, I found that the AAG has not dissolved any of their Specialty Groups for lack of activities or engagement; however, specialty group chairs occasionally receive communications suggesting that this may occur in the event of continued inactivity. I think a similar approach may be considered in case of CAG study groups.

At the Annual Meeting in Quebec City, the CAG approved a proposal to form a new study group on Canada-US Relations and Interactions. Discussions are ongoing about how the SG can and should move forward. I met with Rich Quodomine (one of the suggested co-chairs of this SG), and David Kaplan (President-elect, AAG) in Washington, DC., to brainstorm some ideas. Several people have expressed interest in being part of this SG, and accordingly, we will have our first informal gathering in Winnipeg. I just learned the Canadian Association of American Studies (CAAS) has recently become an association member of the CFHSS. I plan to explore networking opportunities with this association.

## ***The Canadian Geographer, GeogNews***

Nadine Schurmann is doing a fantastic job as the Editor-in-Chief (her eighth year), ably supported by Ellen Randall (Editorial Assistant), the Editorial Team, the Wiley Team, and the contributing editors. Submissions to TCG remains healthy, and the most recent impact factor (1.477 in 2017) indicated a considerable improvement over the past year. Overall, TCG-LGC remains in a strong position, as it continues to attract readers, citations, and downloads. For more details, please refer to Nadine's report.

We are in the process of making decisions about GeogNews.

## **Future Conferences**

University of Victoria has kindly agreed to host the 2020 CAG Annual Meeting. This means the CAG won't be participating in next year's CFHSS Congress that will be held at Western University. Locations of future Congress venues are not known yet, so we may or may not join the Congress event in 2021 and/or 2022. It may be prudent to consider how future annual meeting locations are determined.

## **Other Issues**

Having served as the CAG President for almost a year, I have a deeper appreciation of how scholarly associations like ours function and move forward. I also have deep respect for many CAG leaders and volunteers who have provided us with their skills, time, and effort. However, broader engagement with the CAG is important, as there appears to be a number of challenges going forward. I will mention four here: 1) *Membership* – while the overall membership number is viable, both regular and total numbers overall show downward trends. Membership remains a major issue and has been as such since the early 2000s. 2) *CAG Annual Meeting attendance* - attendance at CAG annual meetings, and some regional meetings, is low. While we have seen strong growth in membership and attendance at the American Association of Geographers (AAG) annual meetings, representation at CAG annual meetings could be strengthened if all Canada-wide geography departments show equal commitment to attending CAG annual meetings. My own personal view is that if Geography is our bread and butter, we identify ourselves with the discipline, and are based in Canada, I think it is critical we are committed to supporting CAG and must make efforts to attend CAG meetings. However, in the end, since membership and attendance are entirely voluntary, some critical thinking is needed as to how we can broaden participation. 3) *Annual Meeting Locations* – both bigger and smaller departments should come forward to host the annual meetings. U of T last hosted the annual meeting in 2002, UBC in 1992, Queens in 1991, and McGill in 2001. We need to reengage these institutions. We also need to give some thought to whether we want to hold our events in conjunction with CFHSS. 4) *CAG Awards* - Some CAG members have expressed their concern about the inequitable awarding of CAG awards over its history. In particular, the Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography has been given mostly to male faculty. There are very few women and visible minority recipients. It is essential that we rectify this situation, which will require major changes in how the nominations are received, processed, and how final selections are determined.

I want to conclude this report with my heartfelt thanks to current and outgoing members of the CAG Executive Committee, and to Kathryn Laferrière (Executive Coordinator) for their many contributions and tireless efforts to making the CAG a vibrant, healthy, and welcoming community. Dan Shrubsole deserves a special mention for his tireless efforts as President (2016-2018) and Past President (2018-2019). Many thanks to Dan for taking the CAG to new heights!