

Canadian Association of Geographers
Report of the President – Sanjay K. Nepal
2019-2020

Following the many successes achieved during 2018-2019, the 2019-2020 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 2019 with respect to these objectives, and offers some personal reflections on future directions.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CAG was forced to cancel the 2020 Annual Meeting to be held in Victoria (May 25-28, 2020). Instead, a virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Tuesday, May 26 from 2:00-3:30pm ET.

2019 CAG Annual Meeting:

The 2019 CAG Annual Meeting was held at the University of Winnipeg, May 27-31, 2019. The central theme of the conference, Geographies of Resistance, was based on the anniversary of two local events that have shaped Canadian history and geography: the 150th anniversary of 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; and the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, the labour protest that revealed deep divisions in Canada and fostered the development of unionism and social welfare.

With over 300 delegates in attendance, 30 student volunteers, a 2-day pre-conference field school, 270 papers in 70 sessions, 4 fieldtrips, Indigenous cultural ceremonies, and evening social events, the annual meeting was a great success, providing many opportunities for academic and social gatherings. The conference also featured special events, such as the Wiley Lecture and the Past President's Address, the lecture sponsored by the Historical Geography Study Group, and the author's reading organized by the Indigenous Peoples Working Group (IPWG) and Canadian Women and Geography Study Group (CWAG, now FIGS).

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). A virtual meeting was held on April 18, 2020. Please refer to Mary-Louise's report for further details.

I represent the CAG on the [Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences](#) (CFHSS). 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 we have 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 a revenue sharing model. 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. Frankly, I was not very enthusiastic about our association with the CFHSS. The CAG may need to re-evaluate the justification of its membership in CFHSS.

Canada is a voting member (one vote) of the [International Geographic 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 (GIA) Program. This implies that all CAG members are also IGU members by default. Continuation of the NRC support requires the CAG to submit its annual report of international activities to the NRC. This report was submitted in February 2020. On behalf of the CAG, the NRC has paid the 2020 annual dues (\$4,500) to the IGU. I expect the CAG to continue to be engaged with the IGU in the coming years. I was planning to attend the IGU Congress in Istanbul in August. The CAG had received a partial travel support (\$1,250) from the NRC for that event. However, now that the event is cancelled, the support is withdrawn.

CAG Awards

At the 2019 Annual Meeting in Winnipeg, the following CAG Awards were presented:

- **The Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography:** Dr. Maureen Reed, University of Saskatchewan
- **The Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography:** Dr. Shivanand Balram, Simon Fraser University
- **The Award for Service to the Profession of Geography:** Dr. Wayne Forsythe, Ryerson University
- **The Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement:** Dr. Carissa Brown, Memorial University
- **The Starkey-Robinson Award for Graduate Research on Canada:** Dr. Jonathan Luedee, University of British Columbia and Dr. Paul van der Werf, Western University
- **The Robin P. Armstrong Memorial Prize for Excellence in Indigenous Studies:** Emily Martin, MA, University of Guelph

Our heartfelt congratulations to these awardees!

It should be noted that one of the priorities of the CAG has been to seek a diversity balance in how we recognize contributions made by our members in various areas including teaching, scholarship, and service. In particular, the President's Report 2018-2019 stated that the Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography has been given mostly to male faculty. There were very few women and visible minority recipients. The CAG instituted major changes during 2019-20 in

how the nominations are received, processed, and final selections determined. The 2020 awards selection is based on a more inclusive nomination process.

Membership

The table below shows the CAG membership numbers from 2010-2019. Please note that the numbers for 2018 and 2019 include only *paid* memberships, not complimentary memberships (e.g. Honorary Past Presidents, Undergraduate Student Award recipients). If complimentary members were included in the 2019 numbers, the total would be 740. Note that paid memberships dropped significantly 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 for CAG members attending the meeting. Regardless, there is a general trend of declining membership over time, which is a major concern.

Table 1: CAG Membership – 2010 to 2019

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*	2019*
Regular Members	429	377	437	426	381	346	285	253	201	297
Student Members	362	339	378	332	329	390	274	341	239	322
Other	230	260	280	265	284	293	313	280	137	85
Total	1021	976	1095	1023	994	1029	872	874	577	704

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

Study Groups

The Study Group Special Funding Program, approved in 2018, sponsored two special events at the 2019 Annual Meeting in Winnipeg:

- The Indigenous Peoples Working Group (IPWG), in collaboration with the Canadian Women and Geography Study Group (CWAG, now FIGS), organized a plenary session with the talented Métis poet & novelist Katherena Vermette (*The Break & North End Love Songs*) to talk about resistance, place, violence, strength of women, and hope. It was hosted at The Good Will Social Club in Winnipeg, MB, and had a great turnout with much interest & support from fellow geographers.
- The Historical Geography Study Group organized a pre-conference workshop aimed at reinvigorating the practice of historical geography in Canada, engaging graduate students working on historical geographic topics, and reaching out to geographers who could benefit from cross-disciplinary conversations. They also hosted a public talk by Dr. Adele Perry, Professor of History at the University of Manitoba, on her research on the links between the construction of the Winnipeg Aqueduct and settler colonialism in Manitoba

At the Annual Meeting in Quebec City, the CAG approved a proposal to form a new study group on Canada-US Relations and Interactions. I had planned to organize an event at the 2020 CAG Annual Meeting related to this theme. The current AAG President David Kaplan and former AAG President Glen MacDonald, together with other CAG members, were to be part of the panel session. However, given the absence of a champion (among CAG members) to push this forward, and based on lukewarm responses to the CAG Executive's repeated calls for expression of interests to join the group, additional efforts on this matter are unnecessary at this time.

Publications

Nadine Schurmann continues to do a fantastic job as the Editor-in-Chief (in her ninth year) of *The Canadian Geographer* (TCG), ably supported by Ellen Randall (Editorial Assistant), the Editorial Team, the Wiley Team, and the contributing editors. Submissions to TCG remains healthy. Overall, TCG remains in a strong position, as it continues to attract readers, citations, and downloads. For more details, please refer to Nadine's report. It is likely there will be a new EIC, as Nadine plans to retire from her role with TCG.

At the 2019 Executive Committee Meeting, a motion to approve the CAG takeover of GeogNews was carried. A GeogNews coordinator was appointed and a publication schedule was approved. The issue released at the end of May will mark the 20th publication of this second edition of GeogNews. The Executive Committee will review the status of GeogNews and the appointment of a coordinator each year at its annual meeting.

Future Conferences

Following the cancellation of the 2020 Annual Meeting at the University of Victoria, the CAG is currently in talks with representatives at UVIC to determine if they would agree to host the Annual Meeting in 2021, whether in-person or virtually. More information about the 2021 Annual Meeting & Conference will be released when it is available.

Concluding thoughts

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 make the CAG a vibrant, healthy, and welcoming community, while conducting CAG businesses collegially and professionally. Since this is my final President's Report, I would also like to express my gratitude to all CAG members in making sure the CAG remains a strong institution. I wish all the best to the CAG and to the entire Canadian geography community as we move forward.