2017-18 has been an exciting year for the Department – we have developed our 2018-2023 strategic plan, and have been working on extensive curriculum revisions and space improvements. We are pleased to report that long needed renovations to our teaching labs have been recently approved. Several of our faculty members have received prestigious awards. Notable amongst these, Nick Blomley was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and Emeritus Professor Tom Poiker was awarded the Waldo-Tobler GIS Prize by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Internally, Paul Kingsbury and Meg Holden received President’s Media and Leadership in Sustainability Awards, respectively. Geoff Mann published several books. Our students have won several competitions. Alongside these accolades faculty have created significant media buzz commenting on a breadth of issues including UFOs, ghosts, crop circles, bail conditions, Japanese Canadian dispossession, corporate funding of public spaces, rental anxiety, Caribbean medical schools, medical tourism, radon exposure, sea level change, greenhouse gas emissions, flooding and climate change. All this work has contributed to raising our 2018 QS World University ranking: 5th of all Geography departments in Canada, and 1st amongst Canadian comprehensive universities. SFU Geography was also singled out as a standout program in MacLean’s Canadian Universities guidebook 2018 edition. Alison Gill retired this year yet continues to travel widely and engage in tourism research. We invite you to check out the details of this year’s news, kudos and events on our website and facebook pages.

We are also proud of our new graduates: approximately 80 majors/honours, 30 certificate and 15 graduate students in 2017-18. We congratulate you all on your achievements and wish you the very best for your future successes.

We hope that you stay connected with us by sending us your stories or joining us at alumni events. Several alumni attended our seminars and lectures this year. It was wonderful to see and catch up with you all.

To those of you who we haven’t seen in a while, we invite you to (re)connect with Geography through this newsletter.

Tracy Brennand, Chair
On behalf of the External Relations Committee, I am delighted to announce two new and exciting Geography Alumni initiatives. First, you can now explore the international geographic footprint of thousands of Alumni with our online and interactive “Where are SFU Geography Alumni now?” map. Here, you’ll be able to learn about the various local and international distributions of Alumni by credentials and graduation years. Second, we are pleased to launch our interactive “SFU Geography Timeline” webpage that documents the many events, including the comings and goings of Alumni, since the founding of our department in 1965. We encourage you to contribute to this ‘living’ document by emailing me any photographs and/or information that can help us better represent our lively past.

I am also glad to include in this year’s newsletter three Alumni spotlight features by Tim Martin, Kirsten McAllister, and Bruce Morgan. Finally, you’ll find a piece on a talk that Eugene McCann and Nick Blomley gave last Fall that elaborated on the radical background of SFU Geography during the mid-1970s. I have really enjoyed the past year chairing the External Relations Committee and I thank all the committee members and the above Alumni for their work that helps us better celebrate the many wonderful facets that comprise SFU Geography.

Paul Kingsbury, External Relations Committee Chair
For me, geography was a telescope to see and understand people and places beyond my immediate experiences. I did my MA thesis on peasant economies in Southern Mexico in 1982. I wanted to understand why mountain villages still farmed that same corn, beans and squash the same way their Mayan ancestors did. Nearby towns down a slippery footpath and a short bus ride away were modernized in terms of buying and selling in the world market. Well, I learned that the communities had been forced off the good land by the Spanish and then later on by ranchers. Subsistence agriculture on communal land was what they had left after generations of dispossession and discrimination. What I really learned was respect for the survival strategies of others.

After graduation, I joined the Canadian diplomatic corps in 1983. I worked in seven different countries (Barbados, Ethiopia, Palestine, Kenya, Argentina, Afghanistan and Colombia), and had foreign policy jobs at headquarters. Probably the job where I was best able to make a difference was as Chairman of the Kimberley Process to ban blood diamonds in 2004. It taught me that unmanaged global supply chains for minerals can end up financing war lords and human rights violations. Today, I work with RESOLVE, a non-profit for multi-stakeholder solutions to health, environmental and economic problems. Our Resource Diplomacy program applies diplomatic tools to issues of natural resource conflict. Right now, I am working on an initiative called LiFT - Sustainable Lithium for a Responsible Energy Transition. LiFT is about producing and trading the massive amounts of South American lithium needed for batteries in ways that provide local benefits and protect delicate ecosystems. This time, let’s not break the planet in order to save it.

Tim Martin, (MA Geography, 1982).
Although I had no way of knowing at the time, my Geography degree from SFU in 1978 provided the perfect foundation for a 40-year career in public sector environmental management. My Geography training (reinforced by a Masters in Natural Resource Management, also from SFU) opened the door to opportunities in environmental planning, policy, biodiversity and environmental assessment.

Why has my Geography degree served me so well? Geography is about patterns and relationships. Such considerations need to be understood and factored into all aspects of the physical and human dimensions of environmental management. Throughout my career I have proudly described myself as generalist as I worked alongside specialists from many fields, including biology, economics, engineering and law. I firmly believe that being a generalist is as much a valued-added “specialist” skill as the expertise provided by those that come from narrower backgrounds. In my experience, the environmental field has ample specialists, and it is generalists – those that are interdisciplinary by nature, those that can connect the dots among all of the specialist contributions – that are in short supply. Geographers are wonderfully positioned to play such a role.

So, what is my advice for current Geography students? Consider becoming a geographer. Not an economic geographer or a social geographer or a physical geographer or any of the multitude of specialties in Geography, but simply a geographer. The greatest asset of our discipline is that it provides the perspective, skills and knowledge to coalesce the contributions of others. Go with that strength: be a geographer!

Bruce Morgan, (BA Geography, 1978).

While I completed my B.A. in Social Geography at Simon Fraser University 28 years ago, I still vividly remember my courses with Michael Eliot Hurst, John Pierce, William Gibson, Philip Wagner and John Brohman. They taught my cohort everything from radical geography and the ideological underpinnings of the discipline; to utopian philosophies about architecture and the built environment; and economic analyses of the 1970s oil crisis and resource extraction that ring true today. Now an Associate Professor in SFU’s School of Communication, looking back over my career, it is evident that my training in Geography had a powerful impact. Geography shaped my approach to analyzing historical, as well as contemporary problems in our rapidly changing globalized world. I was initially drawn to the discipline because it bridged the divide between the sciences and the social sciences.

But I was soon drawn to the ideas and the training in graphically and conceptually transposing geological formations and social dynamics into spatial representations, imparting skills in design, abstraction and critical imagination. Critical imagination – the ability to project images from facts – has been essential for my own work in the field of Memory Studies where the traces of the past, especially experiences of persecution, are often erased from contemporary landscapes. After completing a Ph.D. in Sociology at Carleton University, I received a SSHRC postdoctoral fellowship to study at Lancaster University in England. Here my advice to students is to always take the opportunity to challenge yourselves and study outside your borders of familiarity. Moving away from BC opened up new perspectives and networks of possibility. While I ended up back in Coast Salish territory, it is with a broader, enriched understanding of the spatial dynamics that necessarily link this region and my work with other regions globally.

Kirsten E. McAllister, (BA Geography, 1989).
Our undergraduate program includes over 470 majors and minors. We have pursued an extensive program evaluation and reconstruction recently. Highlights of recent and planned changes include the conversion of the current BA – Geography (a general geography degree) into a BA – Human Geography, which will be an explicitly social science degree, focusing on three clusters: Economy & Politics; Society & Space; and Urbanization & Urbanism. We have also seen the growing popularity of our BEnv – Global Environmental Systems, which we continue to enhance its focus on decision-making, inequity, and political contest, and related environmental change. We also had the opportunity to reconsider our existing BA – Environmental Specialty to better distinguish it from the BEnv.

In addition to the above initiatives we have sought to enhance students’ preparation for careers through a new course, Geography in Practice, which we plan to require across all our programs. The course will help students gain an understanding of what geographers do in the ‘real world’; learn how to translate geographic concepts and ideas into applied skills; and develop a portfolio of written work, which will include employment application letters, resumes, and online career-oriented profiles, reflections on ethical practice, collaboration, and knowledge translation. The department also continues to find ways to develop its strong commitment to experiential learning as an essential part of geographic education. Finally, our BSc programs, in Physical Geography and GIS, will likely change less in the near future, but we will continue to assess them and make small changes as necessary to enhance our students’ experience and learning outcomes.

Eugene McCann, Undergraduate Program Chair
In 2017, Geography received a generous gift of $50,000 from an SFU alumnus to establish the Geography Undergraduate Fieldwork Endowment Fund. The donor was inspired to establish the fund in honour of past SFU faculty members Len Evenden, Paul Koroscil, Jim Wilson and Phil Wagner. This new endowment will help increase experiential learning opportunities for students in Geography. One of the factors that makes for a successful enabling environment for learning in Geography is the ability of the institution to offer access to challenging and stimulating learning experiences in the field. SFU recognizes that spending time in the field is an integral and valuable part of every Geography student’s degree.

This year interest from the endowment was used to help reduce costs to students taking part in the 13-day Physical Geography Field School course (GEOG 310) which took place in the Okanagan. In addition, heaters and a coffee maker were purchased to improve student comfort and morale. In future years, we hope that the fund will help facilitate annual international field schools, allow us to purchase consumables for student designed field projects and equipment (e.g., kite mapping; infrared photography; air quality and weather monitoring), or to rent a houseboat to allow lake monitoring and comparisons.

We are thankful and humbled by the generosity of this donor and dream of the day when we may be able to expand our fieldwork opportunities to all courses with full accessibility (i.e. no additional costs to students above course fees) to all Geography students.

We welcome additional gifts to this fund. Donations can be made at www.give.sfu.ca

Students in the Dining Hall at Camp Owaissi, north of Kelowna, where they enjoyed meals and completed the bulk of the field data analysis.

Measuring water quality from canoes and surveying beach profile along Okanagan Lake.

Surveying ice-marginal paleochannels in the North Okanagan.

Heaters improved morale and comfort in the non-insulated cabins at Camp Owaissi.

A group of students discuss the best approach to determining the position of the surface drainage divide at Traders Cove, Central Okanagan. First things first…where to set up and anchor the total station?
In the past three years, the Grad Studies Committee has worked hard to rationalize and consolidate course offerings as well as draw up better language to describe our qualifying exam, oral defence and thesis proposal process. While this may sound like mundane business, it is very important for both grads and faculty to have a clear roadmap for student progress through our program. We have also worked to do a better job of advertising that our program is research intensive — based on a mentorship model. This involves a close relationship between grad students and faculty to develop and execute a top-quality program of original research.

Last fall, we organized a panel with faculty titled “Demystifying the Academic Hiring Process”. We videoed the event and are hosting it on our website (please scroll down). This spring, Dongya Yang, our Associate Dean (Graduate and Research) for the Faculty of Environment (with the help of PhD student David Swanlund and MA student Samantha Thompson) put on our first faculty wide Grad Research Day. 71 students signed up and it was a great success. The faculty side of our program was complemented by a series of exciting workshops put on by the GGA which provide peer to peer instruction on conferences, fieldwork and many aspects of research.

Nadine Schuurman, Graduate Program Chair
Welcoming a New Member

June 2018

Department of Geography

You know how it goes – you’re on the Skytrain, or in a grocery checkout line-up, and you start talking to a friendly person, and they ask what you do. Maybe you say you’re a student (as I did up until 2014), or a prof (which I was for a few years at Concordia in Montreal, and now luckily, I am here at SFU), and they say: “a prof in what?” And you say (if you’re me): “Oh, human geography.” Nineteen times out of twenty a look of confusion is followed by either a joke about colouring maps, or an invitation to say more, in which case I explain: “well, I’m a human geographer, but I study animals.” This clears up nothing. So, I change tact and go topical: “I research the global exotic pet trade.” This usually brings some clarity but can open a new can of worms. A surprising amount of the time, the person gushes: “omg, I want a baby [monkey, bearded dragon, parrot] so badly.” That usually kills the conversation. In grad school people used to say it’s wise to know what non-academic jobs your research expertise could be used for.

All I could ever come up with was exotic pet dealer. So, it’s all the more delightful to be joining this department as a professor 😊. I’ll be teaching classes in economic geography, nature and society, and theory and qualitative methods. Undoubtedly in each, exotic pets will make an appearance – photographically, of course. In the meantime, I’ve started a new research project on political economies of extinction, in collaboration with Jess Dempsey at UBC. We’re trying to explain why some populations of caribou, despite receiving the highest legal and regulatory protections in Canada, are still projected to go extinct within our lifetimes. Stay tuned for how chatty grocery shoppers respond to that one.

Rosemary-Claire Collard, Assistant Professor, Economic Geography
I retired last August after 32 years of working at SFU in the Department of Geography and the School of Resource and Environmental Management (I had a 25% appointment in REM). Everyone asks, ‘What are you going to do in your retirement?’ Well, so far, I seem to have been too busy to think up any grand plan. I am writing this from a 5*****spa resort in the Austrian Alps south of Salzburg where I have just given a keynote address to a conference on tourism and nature - all very lovely - looking out on a picture-postcard ‘Sound of Music’ landscape. So that’s this week! Last week I was lecturing (along with 9 other Professors) to 84 international tourism management students from 5 countries (Germany, Israel, Hungary, Croatia and Oman) on ‘Planning and Sustainability in Coastal Tourism’ as we sailed for a week aboard a flotilla of four motor yachts around the Croatian islands in the Adriatic Sea.

So that’s the life of a retired ‘tourism geographer’! Geography has always been in my heart and soul, and in mixing with colleagues in the interdisciplinary realm of tourism studies, I never miss a chance to promote my beloved discipline!

In my years at SFU in various capacities as a lecturer, researcher, graduate supervisor and from time to time, administrator, I was blessed with wonderful, supportive colleagues and friends. While I don’t miss such things as the grading of papers and exams, meetings, the commute over 2nd Narrows Bridge, I do miss seeing my friends and colleagues. Of course, not all my time is spent travelling, though since September I have been in the UK twice, visited Jasper and Ottawa and attended the AAG meeting in New Orleans. I fly to the UK tomorrow to spend more time with my grandchildren and family (now in Wimbledon) and then visit the rest of my family in Shropshire. When I return to Vancouver in June, I have to get serious for a few months and catch up on several writing commitments ... but I expect the travel bug will get me again before too long. So as you can see, I’m currently far too busy to address the ‘list in my head of what I might do in retirement’ - for example, sort and digitize the boxes of several hundred 35 mm slides that I’ve carted around for years, maybe unpack the boxes of books I brought home from my office, improve my French, find a hobby(!) etc, - these will all just have to wait until I have nothing better to do! I hope you all have a great summer and that I get a chance to catch up with some of you.

Alison Gill
We live in a time when global climate change threatens each of us in increasingly dramatic ways. From unprecedented floods to unforeseen droughts, we are all exposed to an alarming range of environmental risks. That perilous future looks brighter, however, when we recognize the power of education to improve our lot. With knowledge comes awareness and the promise of meaningful change. The Department of Geography itself is a leader in advancing multi-disciplinary approaches to combat complex, “wicked” problems. Training the next generation of change makers, our teaching and research faculty explore issues ranging from physical geography and environmental science, to human geography; from geomorphology to the built environment. That broad and deep span of research and teaching activities is necessary to advance truly innovative solutions to wicked environmental problems.

Within that range of activities, the Department of Geography offers research and education in two areas that are unique - and growing - priorities for the Faculty. The first relates to the role of human geography. The second relates to the work on cities. Certainly, the physical sciences are key to environmental problem solving. But we must not forget that decision making relies upon human attitudes, perceptions and judgments. In the Faculty of Environment, human geographers remind us that environmental problems and opportunities are integrally linked to social, cultural, economic, political, and moral elements. Humans do not exist in the absence of place. Environments – built and natural – define who we are. It makes no sense to imagine physical environments separately from human subjects. For this reason, human geographers have a special place in the Faculty, as they recognize the deep connections between our material spaces, our landscapes, our planet – and human paradigms within which those places are understood.

The second unique area explored by many geographers is the role of built environments. Today, addressing “environmental” problems means acknowledging the central role of cities, both as the source of these challenges as well as the place of promise.

Certainly, we wish to preserve wilderness areas, parks and wildlife. But we know that environmental sustainability is only attainable if we shift our ways of living within cities, given their global impact on climate change and environmental risks.

The Department of Geography is leading the way in advancing teaching and research in these two important areas – as well as many others that reflect both the breadth and depth of understanding necessary to tackle the most demanding environmental challenges. It is that broad range of commitment that is most valued by the Dean’s office, as well as by others across the Faculty of Environment.

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, Dean
The Geography Student Union (GSU) has hosted several social and fundraising events over the past year. In the Fall, we welcomed several new active members and executives, and we are thrilled to see new faces and engage with more students every semester at events and weekly meetings. We have made it a priority to continually be active in engaging as much of the student population as possible. Most recently this can be illustrated in part by events such as Board Games and Bowling nights, expanded t-shirt sales, and our 9th annual Experiential Learning Trip (ELT). We also welcome the introduction of our new Geography Student Union logo, inspired by a long-lasting poster in the GSU’s common room. This logo is present on our latest round of merchandise.

Our year of events capped off with the 9th annual ELT to British Columbia’s Sea to Sky Corridor in late April 2018. The trip agenda encompassed many facets of both human and physical sides of geography through a variety of events and activities including tours of Britannia Mines and Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Center, and both a Rail Line walk and a walk to Lost Lake. Whistler/Squamish proved to be an ideal setting for the trip, showcasing how tightly different streams of geography are wound together, and how they directly and indirectly influence each other and landscapes at large. The ELT was a success in allowing students to apply what they have learned in the classroom off of Burnaby Mountain and will look to be built upon as we ring in a decade of ELT trips in 2019. We are excited with the direction the GSU is heading and are looking forward to growing our outreach in the department with many more events next year.

Ryan Hayes, Geography Student Union, External Relations Representative
This past year has been a busy and successful one for the Geography Graduate Association. We have continued to work hard to organize fun and productive events that build cohesiveness, prepare us for grad life, and establish us as a vital presence in the Geography department. In September, we held our annual graduate retreat in Whistler to welcome the incoming cohort. It was a beautiful day, and after meeting up in the city, we drove up to Whistler, on the way stopping for short hikes at Lions Bay and Shannon Falls before taking a lunch break at Stawamus Chief Provincial Park. After a shopping trip to Whistler, we went to the hostel where we made dinner together and played some icebreaker games. On the way back to Vancouver the next day we stopped at Alice Lake to have some snacks and enjoy the beach. The retreat was a great success, and it was a wonderful opportunity for the grads to get to know each other informally before settling into the fall term. The GGA has also held a number of social events throughout the year, including a karaoke night, a trivia themed holiday party, bowling, and a board game night. In addition, we organized an informal, weekly happy hour at Club Ilia. These events have been great at fostering a sense of community within the department and have been a fun way for students to take a break from their graduate studies. Apart from the social events, the GGA has actively facilitated opportunities for graduate students to develop their professional and academic skills. In September, the GGA organized the department’s first-annual TA/TM Training Workshop, a day-long event that offered training and support for new and experienced TA/TMs in Geography. The GGA also launched our graduate mentorship program, where incoming graduate students have the opportunity to be paired with a current graduate student as their mentor, to help them become acquainted with the department.

In the spring semester, the GGA organized a Graduate Workshop Series for students in the department. The series featured workshops facilitated by faculty in the department, on several topics including conferences, academic writing, and research. The department has the GGA’s initiatives in a number of ways, for which we are grateful. Graduate students continue to be active members of department committees, and in the Spring the GGA struck an ad hoc advocacy and solidarity committee for graduate and undergraduate students in the department, called Radlands SFU.

Throughout the year, the GGA and also helped support members attending and presenting at conferences around the world. In 2017-2018, members travelled to places as far-flung as New Orleans, Prince George, Vienna, Seattle, Portland, Montreal, Rotterdam and Portland to present their research. As we head into the summer, the GGA will continue to develop ways to support grad students through department-specific training initiatives and social events. We are excited for the fall when we can welcome next year’s cohort!

- Geography Graduate Association -

**Place + Space Collective:** In Fall 2016, graduate students in Geography and Urban Studies came together to create the Place + Space Collective: an interdisciplinary academic solidarity collective whose current membership is comprised of urban studies and geography graduate students. The Collective leads with solidarity for each other and works within a non-hierarchical model of consensus, friendship, empathy, and care. In December 2017, the Collective hosted the mini-conference, Strategies for Solidarity for forming collectives in the neoliberal academy. The Place + Space Collective is currently working on a podcast series about solidarity and activism in the neoliberal academy. Learn more about the Place + Space Collective at [http://placeandspacecollective.wordpress.com](http://placeandspacecollective.wordpress.com)
On October 11, 2016 Eugene McCann and Nick Blomley gave a talk entitled “The Radical Convergence: SFU’s Geography Department in the Mid-Seventies”. The talk, which took place in a packed room in the Harbour Centre, described the radical histories of SFU Geography. Bob Galois and Nathan Edelson, who were graduate students at the time, provided some responses and thoughts, followed by a lively series of questions and recollections from the audience. A chapter in a forthcoming book, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the radical Geography journal, Antipode, will cover this period, relying heavily on the memories of those who lived it. The SFU Library has archived some of the written material associated with the event, including records of the Vancouver Local of the Union of Socialist Geographers, as well as material related to the Vancouver Geographical Expedition. This should be digitized and made publicly available soon.
Student Research and Fieldwork

Doctoral candidate, Germaine Tuyisenge and supervisor Valorie Crooks at a local women's cooperative in Nyamirambo, Rawanda learning traditional weaving. The research examines women's access to maternal health care at the community level.

Doctoral candidate, Hilda Fernandez with her poster at a Vancouver Community Research Day organized by the Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute. Hilda’s research examines the psychoanalytic geographies of trauma and healing in mental health institutions in Vancouver.

Dr. Lance Lesack and M.Sc. student, Kimberley Geeves, taking a sediment core from one of the lakes in the Mackenzie River Delta, Western Canadian Arctic.

GEOG 420 student Joan Wandolo (second right) at the City of Vancouver’s "Redressing Urban Displacement” panel. Joan sits on the Board of Directors for Hogan’s Alley Society (HAS) a non-profit organization composed of civil rights activist, business professionals, artists, writers and academics. [Photo Credit: @Zuleyyma]
Student Research and Fieldwork

Doctoral candidate, Oliver Keane conducts an interview with Tom Sewid a Sasquatch investigator on Vancouver Island. Alongside supervisor Paul Kingsbury, the research examines the mainstreaming of paranormal investigation cultures.

GEOG 310 students, Alex Girling and Matt Watkins, map ice marginal channels derived from past ice sheet movements on Coldstream Ranch near Vernon, BC.

GEOG 325 student, Vivi Djaja conducts interviews at a local farmers market in downtown Vancouver.