
Preface

Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essays is published in coordination with the annual meeting and conference of the Prairie Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers (PCAG). The 2016 annual meeting ran from September 23 to 25 and was held in Melfort, Saskatchewan, where it was hosted by the University of Saskatchewan. A total of 72 attendees gathered for the conference, which consisted of paper presentations, a poster session, a field trip, executive and business meetings, and a banquet. The decision to assemble in Melfort holds to the long-held PCAG tradition of hosting the annual meeting event at a location outside the main urban centres of the prairie region. Melfort is located 150 km northeast of Saskatoon and is home to a population of 6000 (2016). Typical of most small Saskatchewan prairie cities, it has a rich farming history and provides a wide range of central place functions to its agricultural hinterland.

Conference activities were staged in the fabulous Kerry Vickar Centre, a facility named after a highly successful businessman and philanthropist who was born and spent his childhood in Melfort. On Saturday morning a total of 18 papers were presented in a series of four sessions. Eight of these papers were presented by students each of whom was awarded a Paul Simpson-Housley/CAG Student Travel Award and a one-year annual membership of CAG. In the early-morning, two concurrent sessions commenced. The first was a session on Remote Sensing chaired by Dr. Xulin Guo, University of Saskatchewan, while a second session on Environment, Planning and Governance was chaired by Dr. Joseph Piwowar, University of Regina. Following these concurrent sessions there was time for coffee and poster viewing. A total of fourteen posters were presented, seven of these were presented by students each of whom was awarded a Paul Simpson-Housley/CAG Student Travel Award and a one-year annual membership of CAG. Following the poster presentations, and in mid-morning, two concurrent paper sessions commenced. The first session was on Resources and Geomorphology chaired by Dr Dirk de Boer, University of Saskatchewan, while a second session on Human and Historical Geography was chaired by Dr Ryan Walker, University of Saskatchewan.

On Saturday afternoon most attendees participated in a field trip to learn more about the cultural history of Melfort and its immediate hinterland. The trip consisted of three tours. These were organized by staff and volunteers of the Melfort and District Museum and, in particular, by Gailmarie Anderson. The first tour, taken by bus, visited historic churches of the region and the community of Edenbridge. Verna Tluchuk guided this tour with Melfort city councillor Bob Jung also attending. Extensive notes describing the tour are provided by Jock Lehr in this volume. The second tour comprised a walking excursion through Melfort's historic downtown. This included viewing of a video titled Virtual Melfort at the Melfort Public Library, and a visit to the city's Historic Post Office (c 1912). The latter including a climb up the building's clock tower. Museum

volunteers Alan Porter Coffee and Michelle Waldbillig served as tour guides. The final tour was of the Melfort Museum and was led by Dale Link, Larry Sparks, and Gailmarie Anderson. The group toured the 18 buildings on display at Pioneer Village including a grist mill, blacksmith shop, sawmill, and general store. PCAG is grateful to Gailmarie and the other volunteers for their superb efforts in coordinating the afternoon field tours. Many thanks to all for a great job!

The evening banquet was held at the Kerry Vickar Centre. The PCAG guest speaker was CAG National President Dr. Dan Shrubsole, who spoke on the topic of "Leadership and Taking Care of Yourself: Personal Reflections on Integrated Water Management Research and on Mentoring." The talk was very well received. The evening concluded with remarks from PCAG President Dr. Derrek Eberts, the annual slide show competition, and an awards ceremony in which Dr. Matt Dyce, University of Winnipeg, received the Early Career Award. This award recognizes new faculty members who have made outstanding contributions to the geography of the western interior. Congratulations Matt.

Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essays is the annual peer-reviewed journal of the PCAG. The papers within are often based on presentations at the PCAG meeting but are also drawn from a wide community of scholars including association members, geographers working at prairie institutions, and those not based in the region but working on topics relevant to prairie geography. Volume 19 is composed of seven research papers grouped into technical and human aspects of geographic inquiry.

The technical geography papers begin with Jacqueline Binyamin and Robyn Ploquin's exploration of factors that control light use efficiency to improve global estimates of carbon uptake from the terrestrial biosphere using white pine as the study sample. Next, Bradley Doff and Todd Randall report on their use of a GIS-decision support tool called the Urban Forest Benefits Model. They explore the potential of this tool to develop an inventory and framework of urban forest benefits calibrated for a specific city in order to assist with the sequencing of greening activities such as planting, maintenance, and protection, to optimize community co-benefits and attain long-term urban sustainability goals. Mirva Travland, Abdul Raouf, and Tayab Shah explore the feasibility of remote sensing and GIS techniques to demonstrate their potential for identifying and classifying park and conservation area facilities with special emphasis on the classification of a trail system in the Wakamow Valley, Saskatchewan. The authors' goal is to develop an information system for efficient management and improvement of park facilities. Ulrike Hardenbicker and Brent Bitter venture to Saskatchewan's Avonlea Badlands to evaluate the potential of using high digital elevation models to reveal subsurface erosion features and the connectivity of surface and subsurface drainage networks. They conclude that identifying subsurface erosion processes could help in understanding high erosion rates and sediment yield in badland environments.

In the first human geography paper, Lindsay Herman explores ‘whiteness studies’ to evaluate the colonization and racialization of non-white communities in the Prairie west. Herman notes that while whiteness studies in geography are growing in popularity across North America, the Canadian prairies offer a unique social, spatial, and economic landscape for study, providing conditions where lower concentrations of visible ethnic minority communities lead to the erasure of these group experiences in social and spatial terms. Herman’s paper examines the past and present experiences of Chinese-Canadian communities, living with whiteness as a norm in the Canadian prairies. In the next paper, Julia Siemer and Keir Matthews-Hunter examine the spatial dynamics of urban gentrification in Berlin, Germany. Their study focuses on districts of former East Berlin, where gentrification of the inner city began post-1990 reunification of the German state. They also consider former West Berlin, where the process has since diffused. Siemer and Matthews-Hunter’s paper concludes with a spatial analysis of potential future development areas in Berlin. Closing the human geography category, Christin Kleinschmidt, Robert Patrick, and Marius Mayer describe a project in Saskatoon, SK, where they conduct a study into participant perceptions of benefits arising from community gardens. They show the benefits of shared work-effort and communal work spaces were strongly represented in the case study results.

This volume of *Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essays* marks the 40th anniversary of PCAG. The papers presented herein provide a glimpse into the diversity of scholarly work undertaken by geographers in, and of, the prairie region.

Robert Patrick
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK
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