

---

## Preface

*Prairie Perspectives: Geographic Essays* is the journal of the Prairie Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers (PCAG). Each volume is published in coordination with the annual conference and business meeting of the division. The 42nd such gathering was hosted by the Department of Environment and Geography of the University of Manitoba over the weekend of September 28 to 30th, 2018. Seventy seven members attended the meeting, including 29 students. As usual, the weekend consisted of executive and business meetings, paper sessions, poster presentations, field trips, banquet, and keynote address. Two sets of concurrent paper presentations included sessions on food systems, urban geography, community planning, and climate and soils.

The meeting was held at the Lakeview Hecla Resort, within Hecla Provincial Park, Manitoba. This was not the first time PCAG has held its meeting at the resort, and given its success, it will likely return sometime. The field trips were coordinated by Dr. Heather Hinam, through her company Second Nature. Dr. Hinam is an ecologist with over 20 years' experience as a nature and heritage interpreter. Dr. Hinam led participants on the physical geography field trip to the northern point of the island, where they were able to see the expanse of Lake Winnipeg and learn about the surrounding boreal forest. From there the field trip stopped at the East Quarry to search for fossils and to learn about the area's rich archeological heritage. The physical geography trip ended with a walk on the boardwalk through the Grassy Narrows Marsh at the southern end of the island. The cultural geography trip was guided by David Hems from Manitoba Parks and focused on the rich history of Icelandic settlement on Hecla Island, which started in 1887. The Heritage Division of Manitoba Parks keeps this history alive through tours of restored buildings in the village site, and by focusing on the unique Icelandic settlement identity and the important fishery based out of the Hecla Village harbour. Participants in the tour walked through the village and learned about the trials of living in the harsh landscape and the resilience of cultural practices in the area.

The keynote speaker at the Saturday evening banquet was Dr. Genevieve Ali. Dr. Ali is a highly respected hydrologist who was an Associate Professor in the Department of Geological Sciences at the University of Manitoba at the time (she has recently moved to the University of Guelph). Her research has focused on the hydrological dynamics of inputs into Lake Winnipeg. Her talk, *Failure to Reduce Nutrient Loading to Lake Winnipeg? Understanding the role of Water Connectivity and Legacy Contamination*, focused on alternative explanations of current nutrient loading of Lake Winnipeg. Dr. Ali's research details the data collection methods employed to try to establish if nutrient loading in the lake, and the resultant algal blooms, is best reduced through blanket management of the 1,000,000 km<sup>2</sup> watershed, or by better, targeted methods of management. The talk led to a lively discussion and interest in potential manage-

ment solutions to a significant provincial and prairie-regional problem.

Also at the banquet, Dr. Rachel Herron of Brandon University received the PCAG Early Career Award for her "significant scholarly contributions to the discipline and demonstrated exceptional achievement in teaching." Recognition was also extended to Dr. Roderick A. McGinn, of Brandon University, who received the John H. Warkentin Award for his "outstanding scholarly contributions to the geography of the western interior."

This volume of *Prairie Perspectives* contains three research papers and three review pieces. In the first research paper Katie Doke Sawatzky and Joseph Piwowar address the decline of the range of prairie grasslands between 1990 and 2015. They employ data from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada to show that, whereas concern for diminishing grasslands has long been voiced, only 14% rather than 20% of Saskatchewan's original grasslands remains. The second research paper, by Yossi Katz and John Lehr, examines the digital revolution within Hutterite communities on the prairies. While many of the religious regulations followed by the colonies restrict access to the Internet, in practice these restrictions are not universally followed. This situation is shaped by individual desires to access the Internet as well as the need to use Internet-based communication for the economic and administrative work of the colonies. The restrictions thus become an ideal mediated by practice and an on-going source of tension within the colonies. The final research paper by Jacqueline Binyamin and Hailey Robichaud tests the sensitivity of forest ecosystems to climate oscillations. They argue that as extreme weather and unusual climatic patterns increase with the onset of climate change, a greater understanding of the influences of these events on ecosystem productivity is required. Using net ecosystem productivity measurements in a pine forest in southern Ontario, the authors estimate the influence of El Niño Southern Oscillation and the North Atlantic Oscillation on the productivity of the forest.

Hồng Thị Hà and Aaron Kingsbury return in this volume with the second part of a project that they first reported on in Volume 20. In the current volume they asked rural American University students take everyday life photographs of themselves for students in North Vietnam to view. They report that, as in the earlier paper, the photographs elicited comments that recognized similar or shared social worlds which transcend the cultural divide and great physical distance separating Vietnam and the United States. In the second review, Christoph Stadel and Don Huisman describe the history and characteristics of the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve (RMBR). Building on the protected status of Riding Mountain National Park, the RMBR brings together stakeholders in the region surrounding the park to establish priorities for protecting this important ecological and cultural landscape. In the final review, Bernard Thraves presents a content analysis of *Prairie Perspectives*. By leading the reader through a detailed examination of journal content, the review highlights the success of the journal as both a forum for academic work and a community hub for prairie geographers.

---

## Acknowledgements

I extend my thanks to the authors for submitting their manuscripts and meeting the challenges of the double-blind review process. Thanks are also extended to the reviewers for their pivotal role in assessing the quality of the manuscripts. For their work behind the scenes, Jonathan Peyton, Janna Wilson and Bonnie Hallman deserve recognition. Bernard Thraves took great care in copyediting all of the work in this volume, which contributes to the quality of the papers. Special thanks are extended to Weldon Hiebert at University of Winnipeg for his tireless work in dealing with the many technical challenges in the design and layout of the journal.

Bruce Erickson  
Department of Environment and Geography  
University of Manitoba  
November 2019