

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

What a year it's been! It is an honour and a privilege to continue serving as President of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. I am continually amazed by the creativity and ingenuity of our volunteers, supporters, and staff and their collective unwavering commitment to delivering content and programming of the highest calibre. It is in no small part thanks to these efforts that the Society is gaining a national and international reputation for thought leadership and innovation in geographical education and storytelling.

The highlight of this year was the historic finding of the wreck of *Quest*. Sir Ernest Shackleton's last ship was found in the Labrador Sea by a group of Fellows and friends under the leadership of John Geiger. The news catapulted the Society into the global spotlight and honoured the legacy of a great explorer whose remarkable achievements continue to resonate over a century after his death. Congratulations to the team!

Something I am also particularly proud of is the Society's wholehearted commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This commitment is woven throughout our programming, from our giant floor maps and lesson plans to the pages of *Canadian Geographic*. In September 2022, we launched Biinaagami, a groundbreaking Indigenous-guided program focused on our shared responsibility to the health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence watershed.

CEO'S LETTER

Shortly after 7 p.m. on June 9th, on a small ship slowly cruising the Labrador Sea about 80 kilometres offshore from Battle Harbour, N.L., I spotted an anomaly on a side-scan sonar feed from the ocean floor 390 metres below. Although it would take a couple more passes with the sonar towfish to be absolutely sure, I knew that I was seeing the wreck of *Quest*, the last ship of great Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, and the ship he died on aged 47 in 1922, thus marking the end of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.

This historic find, which made headlines around the globe, creates a tangible link between Canada and a towering figure in polar exploration. I'd particularly like to thank and congratulate Society Governor Antoine Normandin, who led the research for the Shackleton Quest Expedition, and Honorary Fellow and renowned wreck hunter David Mearns, who directed our search operations. There is still much to learn about the wreck and her condition — work we hope to undertake on a reconnaissance expedition in 2025 — but already, *Quest* has served as a catalyst to tell many fascinating stories: about the rivalry between Shackleton and Canadian explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson; about the brutal history of sealing off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador; and about the ship's many other brushes with explorers of renown.

To find *Quest* during Shackleton 150 (the 150th anniversary of Shackleton's birth) was incredibly meaningful, as was the opportunity to celebrate an influential climate leader in Canada with a medal bearing the explorer's name. Valérie Courtois, the director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, is at the forefront of a powerful movement to

Over the past year, the Biinaagami giant floor map has been showcased for large and receptive audiences at a series of high-profile venues, including Daly Plaza in Chicago, the Old Port of Montreal and the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. I am excited to see where this program and its beautiful AR-enhanced map will go next!

Also this year, I was pleased to support Can Geo Education's first ever Indigenous co-created GeoSchool at Sea, which saw Mi'kmaq youth from Newfoundland spend a week aboard the *Polar Prince* getting hands-on marine science experience with the staff of Miawpukek Horizon Maritime Services. Speaking of inspiring youth, I extend my sincere congratulations to the members of Team Canada, who made a great showing at this year's International Geography Olympiad in Dublin, bringing home a gold and two bronze medals.

As we continue discussions about our upcoming centennial, one thing is clear: the Society is vibrant and the future is bright! On behalf of the Board of Governors, thank you and congratulations to all who have had a hand in our success.

Hon. Lois Mitchell,
President

revolutionize environmental conservation through Indigenous stewardship. It was a great honour for me to present Valérie with the Shackleton Medal for the Protection of the Polar Regions in May.

I am pleased to share that *Canadian Geographic* continues to be a dominant presence in the challenging Canadian media landscape, this year attaining the rank of Canada's number one paid circulation magazine and garnering five National Magazine Award nominations. RCGS leadership continues to work closely with the editorial team on strategies to secure the long-term sustainability of this important and beloved brand.

Our education network continues to grow, with nearly 28,000 educator members from every province and territory. This year, we were proud to work with a variety of partners to add new themes to our ever-popular Giant Floor Map program: Canada's electrical generation infrastructure, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence watershed, and 100 years of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

We are now just four short years away from our centennial, and there is much work to be done. However, thanks to the ongoing efforts of our board, volunteers and staff, the Society is at the forefront of discussions on the most critical issues facing Canada today, with innovative programs that are nothing short of nation-building. I can confidently say that, at the ripe old age of 95, we are just getting started!

John Geiger
Chief Executive Officer

AWARDS

To recognize outstanding achievement in the fields of geography, education, science and exploration, and for volunteering to assist the Society, the following awards were given in 2024 to individuals who have made a special impact.



RT. HON. VINCENT MASSEY MEDAL
Awarded to **Marie-Josée Fortin**, accomplished academic professor and Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Spatial Ecology, in recognition of her significant contributions to the transformative field of spatial analysis in ecology.



GOLD MEDAL
Awarded to **Jameel Janjua**, a decorated former RCAF fighter pilot and experimental test pilot who flew Virgin Galactic's *VSS Unity* into space on the Galactic 07 mission, becoming only the second Canadian to pilot a spaceflight.



CHARLES CAMSELL MEDAL
Awarded to **Sandra Smith**, an employee of the RCGS for 35 years, most recently as the executive assistant to the CEO, before her retirement in June 2024.



LAWRENCE J. BURPEE MEDAL
Awarded to **Zita Cobb**, a businesswoman and social entrepreneur who is the founder and CEO of the registered charity Shorefast, as well as the Innkeeper of the award-winning Fogo Island Inn.



SIR CHRISTOPHER ONDAATJE MEDAL FOR EXPLORATION
Awarded to **Karsten Heuer**, a wildlife biologist, writer and conservationist; and to **Leanne Allison**, an award-winning documentary filmmaker who draws inspiration from long wilderness journeys in Canada in support of conservation.

The following individuals were made Honorary Fellows this year: Martin Brooks, Pamela Copley, Valérie Courtois, Chief Mi'sel Joe, Elizabeth Oughtred, Tore Topp, Chief Cindy Woodhouse



CAPT. JOSEPH-ELZÉAR BERNIER MEDAL
Awarded to **David Mearns**, a chartered marine scientist, award-winning author and expedition leader of deep ocean projects. Mearns was the Search Director for the 2024 Shackleton Quest Expedition.



LOUIE KAMOOKAK MEDAL
Awarded to **Steven Page**, a Canadian musician, record producer, and founding member, lead singer, guitarist and primary songwriter of the music group Barenaked Ladies.



ALEX TREBEK MEDAL FOR GEOGRAPHIC LITERACY
Awarded to **Ewan Geddes**, a Canadian and world studies teacher in the Toronto District School Board and longstanding member and past president of the Ontario Association of Geography and Environmental Education.



GILLES GAGNIER MEDAL FOR INNOVATION IN GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION
Awarded to **Joanna Thompson-Anselm**, a passionate teacher dedicated to advancing geographic thinking and developing innovative programs like Urban Solutions, which focuses on real-world challenges and uses novel approaches to get students thinking about sustainable development goals.



NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee approved a call to Fellows for nominations and met on October 24, 2024. As is the usual practice during the meetings, the Committee reviewed the Society's specific leadership and governance needs and carefully assessed any new and reserved nominations.

The Committee is committed to the continual strengthening of the Board of Governors as it navigates a challenging national and international non-profit landscape to deliver on the Society's mission at the highest possible level. Given only one position was up for renewal on the Board this year, the Committee unanimously chose to recommend extending the term of the Governor and will retain any new nominations for future consideration.

RESEARCH GRANTS

The Research Grants Committee awarded \$30,000 in funding to seven applicants.

The James Bourque Northern Doctoral Scholarship was awarded to Simona Russo of Western University (*Characterization of Subglacial Meltwater Features and Drainage Dynamics on Devon Island*), and the James Maxwell Human Geography Scholarship was awarded to Meagan Miller of the University of Alberta (*Good Homes Take Work: Increasing Accessibility in Edmonton's Community Housing*).

Additionally, the committee awarded graduate research scholarships to four students: Galen Richardson of the

University of Ottawa (*Tracking the Trends, Losses and Regrowth of Caribou Lichen Using AI and Remote Sensing*), Jaime Dubé of the University of Ottawa (*Assessing the Supraglacial Hydrology of Surging Glaciers in the St. Elias Mountains, Yukon*), Nathaniel Holloway of the University of Ottawa (*Understanding Population Trends of the Aarlik in the Eastern Canadian Arctic and Associated Ecological and Social Implications*), and Erika Brummell of the University of Ottawa (*Assessing Arctic Iceberg Climatology Offshore Eastern Canada*).

Finally, the Independent Research Grant was awarded to Kiara Calladine from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (*Biodiversity Baseline Expedition to the Athabasca Sand Dunes*).

EXPEDITION GRANTS

The Expeditions Committee consists of eight accomplished RCGS Fellows with extensive expeditionary experience in mountaineering, ocean exploration, paddling, speleology, and related fields.

This year, the Committee completed two major tasks:

2024 EXPEDITIONS
In February 2024, the Expeditions Committee supported nine grantees with \$55,000 in funding. The Expedition of the Year grant went to Catherine Chagnon, who sought to complete a single-push self-propelled crossing of Canada's territories from the Yukon-Alaska border to the east coast of Baffin Island. Major grants were also awarded to Justin Barbour (Expedition Northeast), Kathleen Graham (Bisaro Anima 2024), Dave Garrow (The Kangiqlik Expedition), Kirk Safford (The White Rabbit Connection Project), and Brent Arnold (Yorkshire Pot 2024).

The Women's Grant was awarded to TA Loeffler (All Around the Circle: Paddling a Folk Song), the Seed Grant was awarded to Robert Stair (Circumnavigating Great Slave Lake), and the Flag Expedition grant was awarded to Zac Robinson (Finding "David").

SIR CHRISTOPHER ONDAATJE MEDAL FOR EXPLORATION
In August 2024, the Committee considered, and issued its unanimous support for, a special nomination for the 2024 Sir Christopher Ondaatje Medal for Exploration. The Committee recommended the prestigious medal be awarded to Karsten Heuer and Leanne Allison. Whether exploring the Yukon to Yellowstone corridor, or living with a herd of caribou, this celebrated Alberta-based duo has for decades made "necessary journeys" in order to share, through films and books, powerful stories in service of landscape-scale conservation.

COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

The College of Fellows is the voting body of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. The Annual General Meeting is a meeting of this body, at which the Fellows receive and approve reports by the President, Treasurer and Auditors. On this occasion, the Fellows also elect the Officers, Governors and Fellows of the Society.

In light of these essential responsibilities, the College of Fellows should be composed of individuals both interested in the Society and willing to contribute to its mandate "to make Canada better known to Canadians and to the world." Only Fellows of the Society may bring forward nominations for the College of Fellows. In 2024, the Fellows Committee is pleased to recommend 30 individuals for election to the College of Fellows.

ADVANCEMENT

Help us tell Canada's story. That is the call of the RCGS and *Canadian Geographic* as we reach toward our 100th anniversary in 2029-30. For nearly a century, donors, corporate partners and philanthropists have supported the Society and its insatiable curiosity about Canada.

Donor support was critical to the execution and success of the Shackleton Quest Expedition, which found the wreck of *Quest*, Sir Ernest Shackleton's last ship, in June. In some cases, the donors were members of the expedition team, while others applauded from afar the discovery of the famous ship in the Labrador Sea.

Our donors have also helped us build the largest educational network in the country, comprising nearly

28,000 educators who use our lesson plans, giant floor maps and other free programming to engage students on topics such as ocean and freshwater conservation, reconciliation, power generation and transmission and more.

This year saw major increases in support for the Trebek Initiative (see below) and our annual Geographica Dinner, an evening every November when our community comes together in a celebration of the Society and geography. We are thrilled by the continued growth of our Giving Tuesday campaign, annual appeals, and Polar Plunge peer-to-peer fundraising event, all of which support the Society's most in-demand programming.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Our new Strategic Plan, "Ahead by a Century," will guide our activities and priorities for the years leading up to our centennial in 2029-30. Although both the Society and Canada have changed in the past 95 years, our vision remains the same: To help Canadians chart a successful future by fostering a greater understanding of Canada's geography — the diverse human and physical landscape — as well as the changes affecting its people and the environment.

As we prepare to celebrate our centenary in 2029, the RCGS has six major priorities:

- To highlight 50 Sussex Drive as a compelling and inspiring destination by building the new Sir Christopher Ondaatje Reading Room and David Thompson Map Room
- To plan the New Geographies Summit in 2029-2030 to help Canadians navigate the changing climate and its impact on both human and physical geography
- To secure a partner to digitize 100 years of *Canadian Geographic* magazine
- To establish a new network of partnerships to extend the reach and profile of RCGS including organizations like the Explorers Club in New York, National Geographic in Washington, the Royal Geographical Society in London, Royal Scottish Geographical Society, the Fram Museum in Norway and others.
- To work in concert with our partners to invest \$1M annually in research and exploration
- To continue to grow the RCGS as a Centre of Trust for Indigenous Peoples

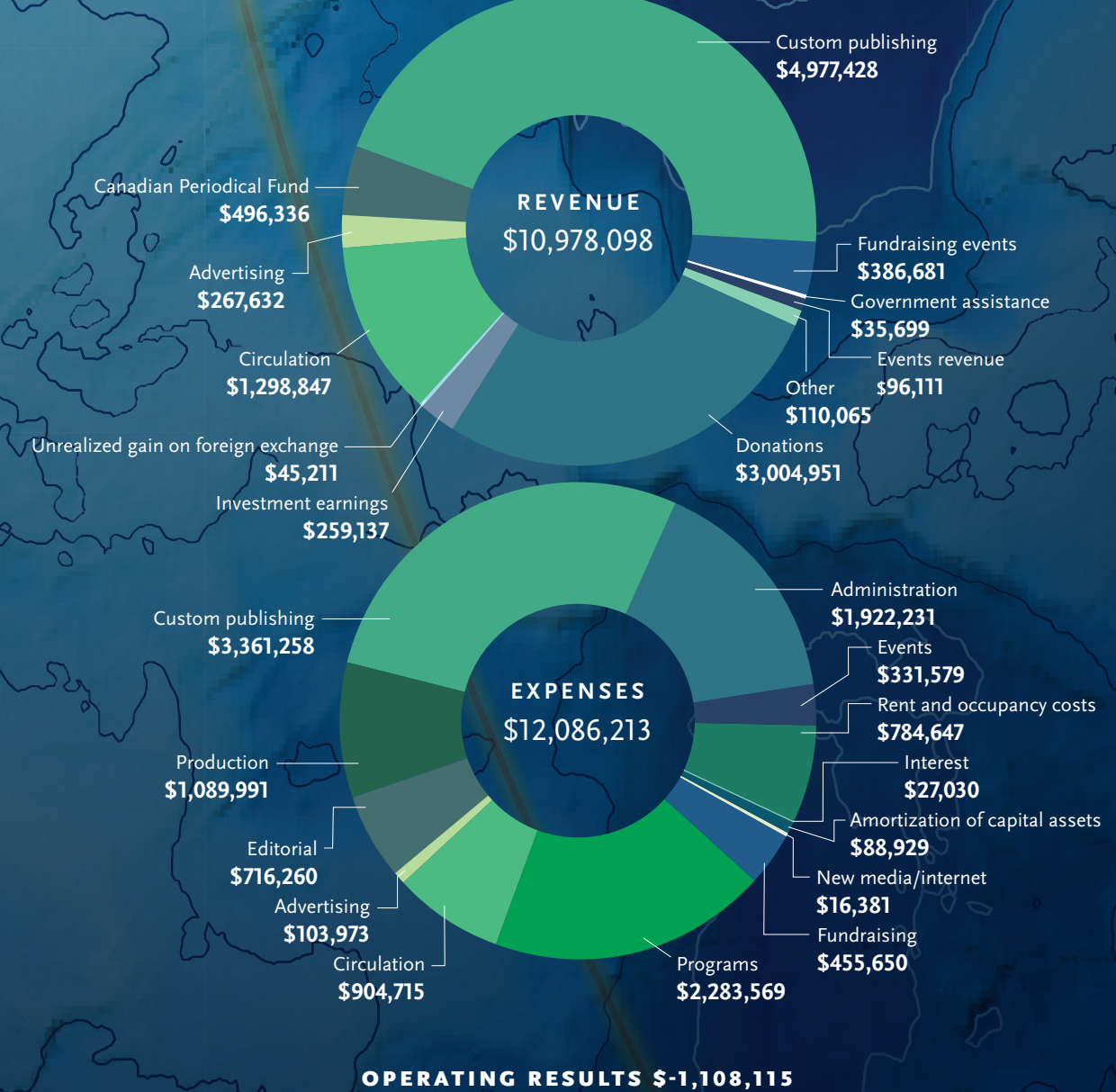
TREBEK INITIATIVE

The Trebek Initiative awarded 15 grants in the 2023/2024 fiscal year. Funded projects include Nick Hawkins' work on the life cycle and conservation of Atlantic salmon, Kira Hoffman's exploration of how Indigenous-led fire stewardship practices can restore biodiversity and support healthy ecosystems, and Andrew Budziak's work documenting winter algae communities under lake ice in the Kenora region. These projects are emblematic of the Initiative's goal to support innovative research and storytelling with a focus on Canada's natural and cultural heritage. The Trebek Initiative remains committed to funding impactful projects and building a community of storytellers and explorers to inspire in all Canadians a passion to preserve.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

JULY 1, 2023 TO JUNE 30, 2024

Full audited financial statements will be available at rcgs.org after the Annual General Meeting of the College of Fellows.



HONORARY OFFICERS

PATRON
Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., O.O., C.D., Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada

VICE-PATRONS
Sir Christopher Ondaatje, O.C., C.B.E.
Lord Martin Rees, O.M.
Hon. Margaret M. Thom, O.N.W.T.

HONORARY PRESIDENT
Chief Perry Bellegarde, S.O.M.

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS
Dr. Roberta Bondar, O.C., O.Ont.
Arthur E. Collin
Wade Davis, C.M.
Gisèle Jacob
Joseph MacInnis, C.M., O.Ont.
Denis A. St-Onge, O.C.

EXPLORERS-IN-RESIDENCE
Emily Choy, Jill Heinerth, George Kourounis, Mylène Paquette, Mario Rigby, Adam Shoalts (Westaway Explorer-in-Residence), Ray Zahab

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

PRESIDENT
Hon. Lois Mitchell, C.M., A.O.E., Calgary

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Gavin Fitch, K.C., Calgary

VICE-PRESIDENTS
Joseph Frey, C.D., Toronto
Connie Wyatt Anderson, The Pas, Man.

GOVERNORS
Janis Field, Toronto
Mark Gallop, Trois-Ruisseaux, New Brunswick
Nellie Kusugak, O.Nu., Rankin Inlet, Nunavut
Akaash Maharaj, Ottawa
Christopher P. McCreery, M.V.O., Halifax
Antoine C. Normandin, Ottawa
Zac Robinson, Edmonton

SECRETARY
Lt.-Col. Carl Gauthier, M.M.M., C.D. Ottawa

TREASURER
Jim Carter, CPA, Lethbridge, Alta.

SOCIETY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEES

ADVANCEMENT
Janis Field (CO-CHAIR)
Ted Meighen (CO-CHAIR)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Hon. Lois Mitchell (CHAIR), Connie Wyatt Anderson, Joseph Frey, Jim Carter, Carl Gauthier

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Jim Carter (CHAIR), Allen Clarke, Gavin Fitch, Mark Gallop, Carman Joyn, Andrew Pritchard (EX-OFFICIO)

EXPEDITIONS
Zac Robinson (CHAIR), TA Loeffler (VICE-CHAIR), John Pollack (PAST CHAIR), Jean Marie Beaulieu, Jill Heinerth, Priidu Juurand, Helen Sovdat

AWARDS
John Iacozza (CHAIR), Dianne Draper, Christopher P. McCreery, Cheryl McKenna-Neuman, Alison Mountz, Wayne Pollard, Maureen Reed

FELLOWS COMMITTEE
Joseph Frey (CHAIR), Antoine Normandin (VICE-CHAIR), Brad Faught, John Pollack, Lisa Tomas, Connie Wyatt Anderson

CAN GEO EDUCATION
Paul VanZant (CHAIR), Jack Headley (PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND REP.), Gabrielle Rogers (NEW BRUNSWICK REP.), Jennifer Leduc (REP. QUÉBEC), Ewan Geddes (ONTARIO REP.), Sandy Welbergen (MANITOBA REP.), Christy Harrick (SASKATCHEWAN REP.), Paula Huddy-Zubkowski (ALBERTA REP.), Rakshin Kandola (BRITISH COLUMBIA REP.), Michael Emery (YUKON TERRITORY REP.) Steve Dagar (NORTHWEST TERRITORIES REP.), Anne Mansfield (POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION REP.), Tessa Fiddler (INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES REP.), Kelley McClintchey (CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF GEOGRAPHERS REP.), Connie Wyatt Anderson (RCGS BOARD REP.)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE
Brian Hodgson (CHAIR), Brad Faught, Carl Gauthier, Janis Field

COMPENSATION COMMITTEE
Hon. Lois Mitchell (CHAIR), Gavin Fitch, Akaash Maharaj

RESEARCH GRANTS
Pat Maher (CHAIR), Denis St-Onge, Christine Duverger-Harrison, Greg Halseth, Leslie Gratton, Janis Dale

BY-LAWS
Gavin Fitch (CHAIR), Christopher P. McCreery, Andrew Pritchard (EX-OFFICIO)

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Akaash Maharaj (CHAIR), Janis Field, Connie Wyatt Anderson

RCGS & CGE LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND PRESIDENT
John Geiger, C.M.

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
John Hovland

VICE-PRESIDENT, OPERATIONS AND PUBLISHER Nathalie Cuerrier
SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Deborah Apps
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Riley Schiurff

VICE-PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC FILMS Tim Joyce
VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING Rosemary Thompson

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Alexandra Pope
MANAGING EDITOR Michela Rosano
SENIOR EDITOR Abi Hayward

VICE-PRESIDENT, LEARNING AND RECONCILIATION Charlene Bearhead
VICE-PRESIDENT, FACILITIES Mike Elston

ASSOCIATE EDITOR Thomas Lundy
DIGITAL CONTENT EDITOR Madigan Cotterill
SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIALIST Kendra Thompson

DIRECTOR, SPECIAL PROJECTS Meredith Brown
DIRECTOR, SOCIETY PROGRAMS Sandy Couto
DIRECTOR, STORYTELLING AND PARTNERSHIPS Dan Mullen
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, VIDEO Daniel Arian

DIRECTOR, BRAND AND CREATIVE Javier Frutos
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS Iza Valle, Sophia Villamayor
CARTOGRAPHER Chris Brackley

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE Jean Mignault
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, FINANCE Samuel St Jacques
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE/ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE CLERK Lydia Blackman

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION Michelle Chaput
MANAGER, EDUCATION PROGRAMS Sara Black
EDUCATION PROGRAM COORDINATORS Eric Nadeau, Dominique Patnaik, Mitchell Taylor
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FELLOW Chloe Bluebird Mustooh

PROJECT MANAGER Danica Mohns
PROJECT AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR Keegan Hoban
PROJECT COORDINATOR Bee Hancock
DONOR RELATIONS ASSOCIATE Laura Cooper
BUILDING CARETAKER Mike Marshall
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Darlene Pelletier



EDITORIAL

This year, *Canadian Geographic* attained the rank of Canada's #1 paid magazine according to Vividata, a non-profit organization that provides market research on print and digital readership in Canada. Our reach continues to grow on digital and among Millennials — a testament to the quality and relevance of our journalism. Major stories covered this year included, of course, the finding of the wreck of *Quest*, plus the uncertain future for wild horses in

TRAVEL PARTNERSHIPS

Canadian Geographic Adventures, a curated collection of outstanding Canadian travel operators offering small-group, guided travel experiences, had a successful year. Over the last 12 months, guests have explored six Canadian provinces and territories and five international destinations, accompanied by RCGS travel ambassadors.

Outstanding experiences included cultural learning and immersion with the Klahoose Nation in B.C.'s Desolation Sound at Klahoose Wilderness Resort, small ship expedition cruising in Haida Gwaii, the Salish Sea, the northwest coast of Vancouver Island and Alaska with Maple Leaf Adventures, and picture-perfect moments in the Northwest Passage, the Torngat mountains and western Newfoundland with Adventure Canada and Great Canadian Trails. CMH Summer Adventures helicoptered guests to remarkable hikes in the Cariboo mountains, adventurous guests rafted the Firth and Nahanni Rivers with Nahanni River Adventures, and eager

Alberta, the increase in great white shark sightings off the coast of Nova Scotia, the ethics of wildlife photography, the decline of passenger rail in Canada and so much more. The editorial team continues to make incremental improvements to the website to enhance the digital presentation of our content. For the first time ever, we were nominated for four Digital Publishing Awards in 2024 — a success we plan to build on in 2025.

birders checked exotic birds off their lists on excursions in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Patagonia with Eagle-Eye Tours. Farther afield, Exodus Travels led experiences in Italy, Egypt and Vietnam focused on culture, history and photography.

Cunard continued as the official luxury cruise partner of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in 2024. This summer, RCGS speakers were welcomed on board the luxurious Queen Elizabeth as part of Cunard's enrichment program for the Alaska season. Voyages started and finished in Vancouver and transited north up the B.C. coast to explore the fjords and glaciers of this spectacular region. RCGS speakers shared stories of adventure, exploration, science, and the wonders of the natural world.

We were pleased to welcome karibu adventures and Blachford Lake Lodge to the Designated Travel Collection in 2024 and are looking forward to their trips in 2025.

CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION

Membership

Canadian Geographic Education's membership continues to grow and now includes 27,682 educators from across Canada. Members include in-classroom educators, post-secondary faculty, homeschool educators, career counselors, extracurricular leaders, On-Reserve educators, teacher-librarians and school board management.

Canadian Geographic Challenge

On May 26, 2024, the 29th year of the Canadian Geographic Challenge concluded with an exciting virtual National Final round. The virtual event was hosted by RCGS Fellow and previous Canadian Geographic Challenge champion Ben Woodward and was watched by over 350 families and classrooms. We congratulate Eric Lu from Vancouver, who brought home the title of National Champion in one of the most competitive years of the Challenge to date.

The Challenge includes a senior-level division, in which students compete to earn one of four spots on Team Canada to participate in the annual International Geography Olympiad. This year's team had an outstanding performance at the competition held in Dublin, Ireland, bringing home three medals and many powerful memories. Noah Pilnitz (Toronto) earned second place amongst 183 competitors and brought home a gold medal; Angad Khattri and Shannon Tang (Toronto) each brought home bronze medals; Julian Bal (Cambridge), a returning participant, also joined the team to represent Canada on the world stage.

This coming year marks the 30th anniversary of the Challenge, yet the development, delivery and reach of the program continue to be limited by a lack of core funding. A committee of dedicated volunteers is working with the staff at Can Geo Education to secure both short- and long-term funding for this impactful program.

Open Waters Education Program

Open Waters is a new inclusivity and awareness campaign led by Can Geo Education and sponsored by the Canadian Coast Guard. Launching in fall 2024, the program aims to break down barriers for young people from underserved communities interested in marine science and conservation. The program will continue to grow over the next two years.

Annual Summer Conference for Educators

The theme of our fourth annual virtual conference was *From Data to Discovery: Exploring GIS in Education*. The conference was attended by over 300 educators from 11 provinces and territories and all grade levels and included a keynote presentation by Ross Donihue, who spoke about the power of storytelling and cartography for social good.

Ministerial Engagement and Geographic Education in Canada

Can Geo Education was, for the first time, invited to consult with the Ministry of Education in Ontario regarding curriculum changes. While this may seem like progress, the reality is that decisions regarding the role of geography in the curricula of most provinces and territories are determined not by pedagogy but by politics. A lack of understanding of the importance of geographic skills and knowledge, the poverty of professional development opportunities for educators, and a failure to adequately coordinate and communicate the value of a strong background in geography has led to the slow but steady erosion of the discipline across Canada. While Can Geo Education meets some of these needs, there is a clear need for greater cooperation and collaboration between various organizations and industries to promote the importance of geographic education as a distinct and integral part of any provincial or territorial core curriculum.

Indigenous Fellowship Program

The Royal Canadian Geographical Society has launched its Indigenous Fellowship Program and has recruited its first participant, Bluebird Mustooh, who will hold the position of Education Fellow until June 2025. Bluebird is a tribal member of the Alexis Nakoda Sioux Nation of Alberta and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Emily Carr University. Bluebird is supporting the Can Geo Education team in the development of Indigenous co-created resources and will learn practical skills as she explores career possibilities that intertwine education and the arts.

The staff of Can Geo Education extend sincere thanks to the members of the Executive Committee, Fellows, sponsors, donors, partners, and educator members from across the country for their continued support.



BASECAMP (FORMERLY CUSTOM PUBLISHING)

Basecamp builds upon our established tradition of engaging a diversity of funders and partnerships to support meaningful work that fulfills the Society's charitable objectives. Below are brief descriptions of some of the larger projects undertaken this year.

BIINAAGAMI: OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TO THE GREAT LAKES

The Society continued to collaborate with Swim Drink Fish on a program to engage and educate Canadians about the importance of the Great Lakes and to encourage advocacy on their behalf. Sponsored by Royal Bank of Canada and Mark Pathy, FRCCS, and guided by Indigenous ways of knowing, Biinaagami had a public launch in September 2024 featuring a giant floor map that employs augmented reality to reveal the Great Lakes watershed like never before, along with extensive learning materials that are available to teachers through the Can Geo Education network and a website to collect stories of the Great Lakes watershed and promote citizen engagement in its protection.

RIDEAU HALL FOUNDATION – INDIGENOUS TEACHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Society embarked on a substantial program with the Rideau Hall Foundation to bring attention to the Foundation's Indigenous Teacher Education Initiative. Our work included a feature story in *Canadian Geographic*, the translation of that story into 10 Indigenous languages, and a website containing an interactive digital map showcasing stories of Indigenous teacher education programs from coast to coast to coast.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD – OPEN WATERS YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

With the support of the Canadian Coast Guard, the Society is developing the "Open Waters" program with the goal of encouraging young people to become interested in and seek careers in marine science and conservation. Deliverables include an interactive website and community workshops intended to connect experts in the Canadian marine industry with youth in those communities.

DEPARTMENT OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

CGE worked with the Department of Canadian Heritage on several projects, including:

- RCAF 100: This two-year project focused on 2024 as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate the Royal Canadian Air Force and its members' legacy of courage, sacrifice and service on the occasion of its centennial. Project components include a feature-length documentary film, *Wings of Honour* (now available on CPAC), a commemorative website, a giant floor map, lesson plans, and six GeoMinutes.
- Can Geo Commemorates 2023: For the fourth year in a row, we celebrated all of Canadian Heritage's anniversaries of significance across our print, digital, education and video streams.

- Nunavut 25: This project celebrating the 25th anniversary of Nunavut becoming a territory consists of 10 stories about the geography and history of Nunavut to be published in English, French and Inuktitut, online and in a special commemorative edition of *Canadian Geographic*.

NETWORK OF NATURE

With funding from individual donors and the Toronto Dominion Bank, and supported by a growing community of like-minded organizations, the Network of Nature maintains a database of locally-appropriate plant species and nurseries specializing in native plants. The program works to encourage the planting of dense, fast-growing "mini-forests" in urban and suburban areas across Canada with a goal of strengthening local biodiversity and implementing nature-based climate change solutions.

In support of our custom publishing work, the Society continued to foster strategic partnerships with the Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Marine Careers Foundation, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, CPAC, the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Nikon, VIA Rail, and others.



CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC FILMS



2023-2024 was another successful period for Can Geo Films. Our production team covered key Society events in depth, resulting in insightful video posts shared across the Society's social media and website platforms. The exciting discovery of Sir Ernest Shackleton's last ship *Quest* in June 2024 made international news, and *Canadian Geographic* was there to film it, thanks to the talents of our Explorer-in-Residence Jill Heinerth.

Honour. This documentary celebrated the RCAF's legacy during its 100th anniversary. Supported by Canadian Heritage, Veterans Affairs Canada, and the RCAF, the film secured a broadcast license on the Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC).

Keepers of the Land, an Indigenous-led documentary about Indigenous Guardians caring for Canada's lands and waters, completed its first post-production phase. With the talent of acclaimed filmmaker Jennifer Podemski and support from the Donner Foundation, it promises to be a landmark film.

At the end of 2024, we began producing a feature documentary with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MN-S), chronicling their journey to realize Louis Riel's dream of self-government for the Métis people.

Our partnership with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) led to the successful completion of six new GeoMinutes and our second feature film, *Wings of*

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Can Geo | Can Geo Travel | CanGeoEdu | RCGS.SGRC
- @CanGeo | @CanGeo_Travel | @CanGeoEdu @RCGS_SGRC
- @cangeo | @cangeotravel | @cangeoedu | @rcgs_sgrc
- canadiangeographic

CONTACT

Royal Canadian Geographical Society
50 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1M 2K1
613-745-4629 | fax: 613-744-0947
rcgs@rcgs.org
rcgs.org | cangeo.ca

RCGS SGRC

Géographique Graphica

