

FIELD NOTES

The Geography Students' Association Newsletter

Volume 1
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November 2007



GSA News

BY NICK GALLANT

By the time this newsletter goes into circulation on November 21st there will only be seven week-days remaining in term one! The next time we have the chance to collectively blink exams will be over, Christmas and New Year's will have passed and we'll all be back for term two. Seems hard to believe in the midst of paper season! With one term drawing to a close and another about to begin this GSA news section appropriately looks both backward and forward, remembering the good times that were and looking towards even better times in the months to come.

More than anything term one was about capacity building for the GSA as we focussed on numbers and presence. Numbers are up, way up. Last year's exec consisted of seven hard working people, this year we've rustled up 18. Last year's membership totals topped out in the low 40's, this year's are already approaching 100. We've also managed to create several more events and other initiatives for the benefit of Geog students. Numbers by themselves are less important than what they allow you to do. With more hard-working people putting on more events you create a less tangible, but ever important presence. Visibility is one way to create presence, but it's more desirable to create it via word-of-mouth. Have you heard non-exec people talking about GSA activities during term one? If so, then the



GSA Execs suited up for Halloween. Spot the Geography-themed costumes: slip-strike fault; tsunami; Mountain Pine Beetle & tree; Michel Foucault; and David Harvey

type of presence we're really gunning for is being established.

If term one was largely about capacity building then what does the GSA plan to do during term two when that capacity is already in place? Well, to some extent we've already decided, but to a larger extent that's up for debate.

We know that we're gonna keep on putting on great bzzr gardens, that we'll debut the second edition of the Trail 6 undergrad jour-

nal and that our end of year Geogala celebration promises to be AMAZING. What we don't know is a lot of the stuff in between. Want us to plan a fieldtrip? Host a Geography specific careers night? Have an alumni networking beer garden? These have all been discussed as potential ideas, but they're big undertakings which require a lot of community support. So let us know what you want to see from your students' association in the second term by emailing ubcgsa@hotmail.com

Good luck on exams!

What's up with the GSA? Upcoming events

Come see for yourself! Everyone's welcome at our weekly GSA meetings Thursdays from 12:30-1:30 in room 215.

Keep your eyes open for our revamp of the Geography Lounge.

Got ideas of what you want to see? Send suggestions to ubcgsa@hotmail.com

Geopit! Last Bzzr Garden of the term.

Friday Nov 23rd 4-9pm in the Geography Lounge (Bake Sale starts 11am)

Games, Bzzr, Czzder, Pzzop, Baked Goods and fun time!

Wynn and Cheese

Meet for a free lunch and informal discussions with Department Head Graeme Wynn, Geography Faculty, and the GSA

Friday November 30th with Professor David Ley

Contact ubcgsa@hotmail.com for more information or to get on the guest list for a free, fun, cheesy time!

The Continental Drift

The Zambezi may look easy... but it's not!

BY MARY-BETH THOMPSON

Everyone knows before engaging in a dangerous activity there are waivers to be signed... but what if it's really dangerous? Well, one option is to sign it twice, at least that's what I did in my excitement to get started on what promised to be a thrilling ride.

Now there are many perfectly safe, lovely activities to do in and around Livingstone, but this was not the day for such things. Instead, this was the day to raft the mighty Zambezi. After all, it is rated # 3 in the world on Lonely Planet's list of top adrenaline rushes on account having the highest concentration of grade 5 rapids in the world. Now, would you pass that up?

The Zambezi is the 4th longest river in Africa, running through six countries before draining into the Indian Ocean. At Victoria Falls, it is the Zambezi River that cascades into a basalt chasm to create a 1.7 km long curtain of water. In the wet season, the mist is visible up to 64 km away, drawing the local name for the falls *Mosi Oa Tunya* – the smoke that thunders. The frothy white water at the base of the falls courses through a narrow gorge and is the site of some of the wildest rafting in the world.



Victoria Falls

Photo by Nilmini De Silva

A brief interlude that we will call "Three Things You Should Know About Rafting the Zambezi (*That I Wish I Knew Before I Went.*)"

1) This expedition is known in some circles as "rafting with crocs" – that's because (surprise!) there are crocs in the calmer stretches. I discovered this about halfway through the day as I dangled my legs in the water to cool down.

2) Approximately 3 people die per year rafting the Zambezi. When factoring in other elements (hmmm...the crocs, for example) this number increases to an average of more than 20.

3) If you sit at the front of the boat it becomes nearly impossible to hear important directions, such as "get down", over the sound of crashing water.

Most importantly, you need to know that if the raft flips, whatever you do, don't let go of the life-line because "the raft isn't going to sink, and if you hold on neither will you."

So far, so good. Although we could all charitably be described as amateurs, we knew a professional would be accompanying us. As we scrambled into the raft, however, we met Timbo, a loud, sturdy looking fellow finishing off the last of a cold one. This is our guide. *Son of a beesting! I knew I should have bought one of those good luck NyamiNyami's in the market earlier!*

So off we go to face our first rapid of the day, *The Boiling Pot*. Stroke! Stroke! Left harder! Stroke! RIGHT... we flipped on the first rapid. We weren't paddling hard enough and the water slammed us straight into the wall and dumped us overboard, the all-important 'life-line' surrounding the raft had eluded us. Now, we had been told not to panic, and initially were too shocked to do anything, just continuing to cling to our paddles in the proper form as we were pulled under water. But as the seconds start to go by and I still didn't know which direction was up, I no longer cared about losing my paddle. As the light dimmed around me I wondered why the lifejacket wasn't pulling me to the surface. Air was running out while the current was flipping me about, I could feel myself being pulled in 12 directions. The pressure from the water steadily increased. After what seemed like minutes, finally it was getting lighter. I could see the yellow of the raft and movement above through the murky water... I was moving towards the surface.

Bouff! A kick to the head. *Bouff! Bouff!* A few more. Luckily, I had a helmet on, but a mental note for swift revenge on the culprit was necessary. When at last I surfaced, the first breath was matched with a reflex to spit out water, which was tricky, seeing as successive waves continually bombarded me. After being hauled back into the boat, we stared at one another in silent, wide-eyed horror, exchanging knowing glances.

At this point we were about 100 feet from where we started and I have to say, I was very tempted to let that 5 minutes suffice as my Zambezi rafting experience. The shame of being a quitter held me to it though and I continued for another several hours till the days end. Though we had several repeat performances and a few close calls, none were quite so horrid as that first flip.

That night sporting our bruises – or 'Zambezi tattoos' – we hit the bar and relived the excitement of coursing through 24 rapids with

names like '*Gnashing Jaws of Death*', '*The Mother*', '*Devils Toilet Bowl*' and '*Commercial Suicide*'.

Despite how terrified I was at the time, I'm thrilled that I stuck it out. To anyone interested, I would certainly recommend the Zambezi rafting experience... Just don't let go of the rope!

The GSA's resident daredevil and world traveller Mary-Beth Thompson visited Zambia and braved the rapids of the Zambezi during the summer of 2007.

**Do you have a great story or photo from your travels to share?
Email kate_liss@hotmail.com to submit to The Continental Drift**

Where are they now? Alumni Profile: Dawn Mooney

BY: REBECCA CHASTER

Dawn Mooney completed her BA at UBC in 2003, graduating with a major in Geography and a minor in English. Throughout her degree she focused mainly on GIS and cartography courses, and also completed the Co-op program. She then spent time travelling before returning to UBC as a Geographer and Cartographer in the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, where she deals with the geographic aspect of research and provision of health services across the province. Some of you may even have seen her around the Geography building recently, as she was instructing Sally Hermansen's cartography course (Geography 372) last year. Here Dawn sheds some light on what a Geographer working in health services really does, and provides helpful hints on following in her footsteps.

What were the most valuable educational experiences for you both in and outside of school?

I liked trying many different things during my BA – a variety of classes, working on campus, being president of the GSA in my final year, etc. All of these diverse experiences allow you to learn many things beyond the classroom and give you confidence in your abilities, which translates into the working environment. Through the GSA I learned how to chair meetings and organize people, while working for TREK (transportation planning) allowed me to get to know how the campus works in a different way than as a student.

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Spotlight Old Growth Discovered in BC Interior

BY: EVA LILLQUIST

What started out as an ordinary search in the field for lichens soon turned into something quite different for graduate student Dave Radies. Roaming Prince George's backyard wilderness, Radies stumbled upon a hidden old growth forest, with towering western red cedars dating back 2,000 years.

The forest, holding similar characteristics to coastal BC rainforests, receives high levels of snow every winter, and is located far enough north to resist forest fires in the summer. The result is a pocket of rainforest in the middle of BC's northern interior; a remarkable find that Radies thinks should be studied and investigated further.

It appears however, that logging companies have already

whipped out the orange tape on this matter. Because old growths don't produce suitable lumber, arrangements have been made to clear out the cedars for the planting of more profitable tree species. Radies fears that logging the area would erase some of the largest and oldest trees left on earth, limiting our already sparse knowledge of old growth ecosystems.

So, working with the local community, Radies has rallied support from surrounding residents to save the site from deforestation. The plan is to advertise the site as a pit stop for travelers taking Highway 16 east of Prince George.

Two years since his discovery, two kilometres worth of hiking trails have been built and the area has become a popular public destination, particularly with school field trips.

Congratulations!

Students and faculty at the Halloween Bzzr Garden on October 26th and the Trivia Bzzr Garden on November 9th walked away big winners after vying for supremacy in the GSA's high octane competitions. The GSA thanks Yuk Yuk's for supplying 45 free tickets given away as prizes.

In the Halloween costume contest there was a tie for most original costumes between Rory Babin as a eastern european pop idol and Melissa Ewan as a Fordist era housewife; most Geography related went to Sally Hermansen for her rendition of Gerardus Mercator; and finally the award for best overall went to Joshua Caulkins for his highly indigenous girlscout.



Student trivia was a hotly contested showdown with "Team the effects of drinking beer on a trivia game" coming out on top. Congratulations to Melissa Ewan, Jon Pokotylo, Tammy Elliott, and Laurie Dickmeyer.



The Prof Trivia competition saw Human and Physical Geography faculty go head to head answering first-year level questions in the opposite specialty. After several energetic rounds, Team Pingu (Science) was victorious, with Ian McKendry, Andreas Christen, Brett Eaton, Marwan Hassan and Brian Klinkenberg receiving swanky GSA mugs for their efforts. Thanks to all the profs who took part, including Arts representatives Elvin Wyly, Sally Hermansen and Trevor Barnes.



GSA President Nick Gallant and Treasurer Michelle Sawka run the trivia board at the November 9th Bzzr Garden

Continued from Page 3 - Alumni Profile - Dawn Mooney

What was your favourite part of being a Geography major?

I liked that we had a building of our own on campus – as a Geography student it’s a place for you to go which helps make you feel like you are a part of something more compared to other Arts students.

Why did you decide to go into cartography?

I always liked maps growing up – I was the kid in elementary school who loved to colour in all of the provinces when everyone else disliked it. I didn’t really know what cartography was all about until I took a course in it at UBC and realized I really enjoyed it. I was introduced to GIS software at Statistics Canada in my second Co-op term, and everything sort of fell in place from there.

Do you have an ultimate career goal in mind?

I don’t really have one thing career-wise I’m working towards – I enjoy combining healthcare and cartography as I am in my position now, and I hope to continue in this field either through further studies or throughout my career.

Please describe for me ‘A Day In The Life of a Health Cartographer’.

I make an effort to stay on top of what is going on in the healthcare sector every week – reading online mapping and cartography blogs, reading health sections of various newspapers, etc. I am the only person in my office working in Geography so if I didn’t make this effort to pay attention I might not hear about events pertinent to my position. As for what I do on a daily basis, the work I do is very project oriented so my day-to-day activities vary greatly. I attend meetings, especially when I am working on a group project rather than one on my own. I actually spend more time helping other people visualize and communicate their data than I spend on geography and making maps. As a Cartographer I have an eye for design, and so through graphics such as charts, tables, and graphs I help people translate knowledge so it can actually be used for policies and decisions made in the industry.

Do you have any advice pertinent to undergrad students who are considering this as a possible career?

Try to experience as many different things as you can, either through classes, work, clubs, or anything else through which you can get more involved on campus. If you can try to find a position doing something related to what you think you’d like to do as a possible career, or at least do something you find interesting and see where it takes you.

The History of the UBC Sustainability Office

BY Janine Pham

Vision

To earn the respect of future generations for the social, ecological and economic legacy we create.

Mission

To create a culture of sustainability at UBC.

What They’re doing

The Sustainability Office is here to promote, coordinate, and implement the most effective sustainability practices possible. By harnessing UBC’s immense physical and intellectual resources, they’re working to develop positive solutions for today’s ecological challenges.



History and Achievements

* In 1990, UBC signed the Talloires Declaration that pledged to make sustainability the foundation for campus operations, research, and teaching and to encourage all faculty, staff, and students to factor ecological, social, and economic consequences into all of their personal and professional decisions.

* In 1997, UBC became Canada’s first university to adopt a sustainable development policy. Policy 5

* A year later in 1998 we became the country’s first university to open a campus Sustainability Office.

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Photos in this issue of Field Notes by:

Nadia Formigoni, Sian Weatherley, Meredith Klassen, and Nilmini de Silva



Bad Latitude suits up for Gladiator

Continued from Page 4 - History of the Sustainability Office

* In 2002, UBC discovered that our more than a dozen unique initiatives, had made UBC Canada's leader in campus sustainability

* In 2003 and again in 2005, UBC was Canada's first and only university to receive Green Campus Recognition from the U.S.-based National Wildlife Federation.

* UBC offers more than 300 sustainability-related courses.

* The SO is currently facilitating at least a dozen focused programs that aim to reduce energy and resource consumption on campus, encourage the construction of green buildings (already we have been awarded LEED gold certification for the Life Sciences Centre and two LEED silver certifications for the Aquatic Ecosystems Resource Laboratory (AERL) and the Fred Kaiser Building) and involve all members of the campus in this ongoing goal to make the university a fully sustainable community.

*The office is completely funded by savings from our energy reduction programs which is roughly over \$2 million per year – this saves 15,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions, reduces water use by 30% and decreases energy use by 20%.



Geography enthusiasts in costume at the Halloween Bzzr Garden



Prof Trivia: Team Arts competitors consult on a tricky question



Got questions?
E-mail ubcgsa@hotmail.com or come out to our meetings Thursdays 12:30-1:30 in Room 215

Trail Six
The Geography Undergrad Journal
BY RORY BABIN

If there's one thing I love doing, it's putting all the papers I have ever written into a shoebox and never looking at them again. But how fair am I being to myself by simply bureaucratically filing away my intellectual property, dismissing works of academic art. It seems too easily we forget the labour-intensive evenings spent in the library, looking up books we never imagined someone would actually write, and then funneling the information into your paper. In the end you produced something you were proud of, if only for a fleeting moment. Your hard work deserves more than a simple letter grade. Papers allow for more self expression than exams, and require further research into a topic by going beyond the course readings. They demonstrate a student's knowledge, interest in subject, and writing and research skills—all a reflection of the university's performance. This is why we at the GSA encourage all geographers to submit papers they are especially proud of to Trail Six, the Geography Department's very own undergraduate journal. The first ever issue came out this past April, so you have the opportunity to get in on the ground level of this publication and institutionalize yourself in UBC Geography history. The deadline for submissions is January 1, 2008, so please submit!

Please send your essay in a word document to geog_journal@hotmail.com

Learning from the Best Faculty Profile: Brett Eaton

BY NADIA FORMIGONI



Why did you want to become a professor?

I taught a course at UNBC before I started my PhD, along with my then-boss at a consulting firm. We continued to work basically full-time in addition to teaching the course (which we ended up doing on the weekends, actually, for 8 hours on Saturday and Sunday). At the end of it my boss (enjoys working 18+ hour days), said that teaching was an immense amount of work, and that he was never ever going to do it again. I agreed that it took and immense amount of time, but it never actually felt like work, and I decided that teaching and research was what I was supposed to do. I could say that it is my calling, but really it is a job that, even after a few years of being a professor, hardly ever feels like work, and is never boring.

What is the worse job you have ever had?

I worked in a jewelry store for a particularly crazy manager. I had to wear a suit and a tie. I had to be polite and proper. I had to convince couples engaged to be married to spend ridiculous amounts of money on an engagement. This was accomplished by manipulating the bride-to-be, then helping the (figuratively and soon to be literally) poor groom-to-be find a way to pay for it. Selling ones kidney or lung ("you've got two, right?") on the black market was a popular option. So were deals with the devil (known in Canada as BMO or RBC). Stay away from jewelry stores.

Do professors gossip about students? If so, what is the reoccurring theme?

We don't really gossip about our undergraduate students. Those that we know well enough to gossip about, we tend to respect too much to use as cheap entertainment. Graduate students and co-workers are a different story. There are numerous stories about anonymous students that circulate. These stories usually pertain to the kinds of excuses people use to get out of assignments and exams, which range from the unimaginative ("my uncle/sister/dog is sick/getting married/getting out of prison") to the rather creative ("my aunt/brother/cat/ has been abducted by republicans/is radioactive/stole my car"). Unfortunately, many of these excuses turn out to be true, which kind of takes the fun out of it. Another common theme are the inappropriate comments that we get on our course evaluations or in e-mails. These are generally not fit for discussion in public.

You grew up in West Vancouver, please, tell the younger generation - what was West Van like in the 50s?

I moved to West Van when I was 16, so it was the LATE 50's. It was pretty much what you would expect. We hung out after school at the local Malt Shoppe and went bowling. We drove around in old, really cool cars.

Seriously, we hung out at Denny's, played pool at the bowling lanes, drove around in old rusted Pintos and Chevettes, and occasionally got hassled by the cops for, well, being under the age of 80.

Rumour has it, your daughter caught you painting your toenails. Quote: "dad likes to paint his toenails" and "he has to keep the nail polish hidden from me because I get mad"

Question: where do you hide your nail polish?

My daughter also says that "Mom likes to drive really fast on the highway. It makes Daddy cry." She also says that "Mom does all the hunting, because she is smaller and faster than Daddy." For the record, I do all the hunting, which is why I need to paint my toenails

Don't forget this week's Geopit!
Fri, Nov 23: 4-9pm in the Geography Lounge



red so I can hide in the strawberry patch. Which is where I keep my nail polish.

There is a picture on Facebook where you are casting a spell. Who is your enemy and why?

I am indeed casting a spell on all the human geographer "life-lines" that failed to help out team "Pingu". TWICE. "Weak. Totally weak. I hate you guys." says my inner Cartman. The spell will inhibit those strokes of inspiration during exams that seem to come out of nowhere to save the day, and will grant the student perfect recall the moment they hand in their exam. Hah. I am a small, petty man, but I am ok with that.

What are your associations with "Pingu"?

As you know, Pingu is a manic, occasionally poorly behaved claymation penguin who mumbles. He is generally good natured but has a tendency to break things. Simply put, Pingu is my spirit animal.

Dr. Brett Eaton is an Assistant Professor in Geomorphology

Grad Photos

Reminder for all graduating Geography Students: remember to get your Grad Photos taken before December 31st. If you have any questions, please e-mail Jason Wong at jasonwong_ca@hotmail.com

Thanks to everyone who entered in the Grad Photo gift certificate raffle. Wnners have been contacted by e-mail.

**Questions? Comments?
Got a great story that you want
to submit to the next edition of
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**Contact Kate Liss (kate_liss@hotmail.com)
or come out to the regular GSA meetings
on Thursdays, 12:30-1:30 in Geography
Room 215.**