

Award for Service to the Profession of Geography Dr Bob Sharpe

Bob Sharpe is highly deserving of the award for service to the profession of geography, which is intended to recognize a member of the CAG for exceptional professional service over a period of years in ways that have significantly advanced the profession and practice of geography in Canada. Bob's nomination included letters of support from former and current students, colleagues at both Laurier and Waterloo Universities, and from teachers and other officials who have worked with Bob in promoting geographical awareness and the relevance of geographical education in the K-12 sector.



When it comes to improving the quality of geography teaching in the K-12 education sector, not since Margaret North's award in 2001 have we honoured a member of the CAG for their contribution to promoting geography at the high school level. The vitality of university geography departments across Canada today directly depends on the health of the discipline at the high school level, yet this work is often some of the least rewarded under the current post-secondary academic framework. Bob's substantial national contributions to the promotion of geography in the K-12 sector have been through his work on the Canadian Council on Geographic Education (CCGE), which oversees the educational programs of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society (RCGS), where he was chair from 2002 until 2009. Beth Dye, the current chair of the CCGE recognizes Bob's passion for geography and states, "On a personal note, Bob inspires me to be a better geography teacher. He exudes such a genuine passion for the subject that he brings it to life in all of his undertakings." Roland Case also discusses Bob's work with the RCGS on their publication *Teaching About Geographical Thinking*, and states that "his work with us is typical of the kinds of selfless and significant contributions to the field of geography that he has been making throughout his career". Reflecting these and other contributions, Bob was appointed a Fellow of the RCGS in 2009.

In 2003 Bob founded and has chaired the CAG's Education Study Group, and was a member of the CAG's Education Committee from 1999-2003. He worked closely with CCGE, OAGEE and CAG to organize several sessions on 'geographic education in Canada' at the 2005 CAG Symposium "Projecting Geography in the Public Domain in Canada". Enhancing the link between secondary schools and Geography departments has also seen Bob work at the local level. He was the co-organizer of "GeoTeach Connections", a program to help place Laurier geography students in the local secondary schools, as volunteers, to support the work of teachers in the delivery of the geography curriculum. Between 1996 and 2008 Bob also developed, administered and instructed a non-credit Certificate Program in the Fundamentals of Geographic Information Systems directed at primarily high school teachers, and hundreds of teachers have since taken the four progressive levels of the program.

In terms of service contributions Bob Sharpe has been a vital member of his department, his university, and his community. At one time or another he has held most of the administrative positions in his department, including Chair and director of the joint UW/WLU graduate program; currently he is the Associate Dean of the faculty of Arts. He is also active in his community, where he is an instructor for the *Laurier Association for Lifelong Learning*, and he has been centrally involved with the Victoria Park Working Group, City of Kitchener.

Bob considers one of his greatest contributions to the profession his supervision of numerous highly qualified graduate students at both the Masters and Doctoral level. Several of these students now have academic appointments and are themselves contributing to the profession and discipline both nationally and internationally, especially in the area of the geographical education. Niem Huynh, assistant professor Texas State University was a student of Bob's, and she writes: "I know of no geographer in Canada who is as dedicated as Bob is to improving the image of geography to the public and improving the teaching and understanding of geography learning." Bob has worked tirelessly on strengthening the

profile of geography across the educational spectrum and in the public domain. He has assisted in the development of his profession, department, institution and community and also mentored numerous graduate students, who have gone on to promote and enhance the status of geography. Bob has also maintained an active research record that adds to the promotion of geography. In recognition of these substantial contributions, Bob Sharpe has been chosen as the 2010 CAG Service to the Profession of Geography Award.