

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020/25

CO-CREATING OUR FUTURE



THE ROYAL CANADIAN
GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY



GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

*“Geography helps us better understand our world
and our connection to it. It can give us a greater
understanding of how to solve problems.”*

–Noah Deng, Can Geo Challenge 2020 finalist





Message from the President & the CEO

The Royal Canadian Geographical Society's mission has stood the test of time, through good times and bad. As our country undergoes significant change to its population, climate, environment, economy and culture, our aim to “make Canada better known to Canadians and to the world” is as relevant today as ever.

Our symbol, the Compass Rose, which has guided us for more than 90 years, is inextricably linked to the Canadian spirit of ingenuity, discovery and adventure. The Compass Rose doesn't simply point us in the cardinal directions. It leads us to explore the values that we share and to:

- Celebrate this nation's natural and cultural heritage and explore both its human landscapes and its farthest reaches;
- Understand the intersection of place and experience and how these shape us as individuals and communities; and
- Equip new generations with the knowledge they need to become the changemakers of tomorrow.

As the Society charts its course toward its 100th anniversary, we do so with momentum fuelled by recent world-leading successes. Highlight examples include our role in locating Sir John Franklin's HMS *Erebus*; our transformative new home at 50 Sussex Drive, Canada's Centre for Geography and Exploration; and the first-of-its-kind *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*. Such accomplishments would not have been possible without the leadership and commitment of our community.





Today, the Society is poised to expand its enviable leadership position, strengthen its relationships with valuable and trusted partners, further embrace its digital transformation and support innovations in geography and research that will transform Canada and contribute to a more sustainable, prosperous future.

The Society believes that 2020 is a time to act boldly, particularly in tackling such difficult challenges as reconciliation, nature conservation and climate change. Reconciliation is a Canadian imperative and the Society is now routinely sought out as a leader on committing to seeking truth and to demonstrating respect through understanding and action with Indigenous Peoples. This is something of which we are very proud.

In concert with governments, non-governmental organizations, thought leaders and volunteers, the Society will continue to play a vital role in educating Canadians about the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change — and encouraging them to take action. In particular, young people and their educators are key to solving our planet's most pressing challenges. Our education network will continue to inspire the world's future leaders.

The Society is committed to promoting an awareness of our past, the challenges of the present and the opportunities of the future. Our 2020-2025 strategic plan is a recommitment to our mission and vision. With the support of our incredible College of Fellows, the Society at large and the entire Can Geo community, we will build a dynamic, viable and sustainable future. As one of Canada's largest national educational non-profits, and as publisher of one of its most-read and best-loved magazines, The Royal Canadian Geographical Society is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the power of geography to unite Canadians, inspire future generations and help chart Canada's future.

Gavin Fitch
President

John Geiger
Chief Executive Officer



“

*To make Canada better known to
Canadians and to the world.*

”



GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

“Geography is the lens for the soul of the Earth. With the knowledge of geography, one can examine the Earth’s past, assess the present and predict future situations. You can literally be ‘lost’ without geography!”

**–Beth Dye, Former RCGS Governor and
Chair of Canadian Geographic Education/Canadian Geographic Challenge**



OUR VISION

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.





GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

“

Get out, be brave and explore the world.

”

—Mario Rigby, explorer





OUR VALUES

Exploratory spirit – encouraging the desire to go beyond the known to chart the unknown in order to advance and impart geographical knowledge

Learning – inspiring the desire to learn and encouraging geographic literacy by the building of geographic knowledge and skills through formal and informal education

Engagement – encouraging and acknowledging the contributions of all those who support the programs and activities of the Society

Collaboration – appreciating the impact and influence that can be gained through working with others whom the Society shares values, aims and affinities

Environmental action – using geography to enhance awareness and understanding of climate- and biodiversity-related issues, to engender engagement and to facilitate participation on the part of Canadians

Respect and inclusion – acknowledging and appreciating the many voices and experiences of Canadians and of everyone who calls Canada home



GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

Society has an urgent need for brave exploration, discovery and outreach. In the face of pressing challenges, the next generation will need to use their curiosity and global connectivity to collaborate, engage and chart a better future for humanity. I am proud that the RCGS intends to fulfil a role of guidance, amplification and outreach, helping to equip Canadians with tools for personal and collective discovery and, in doing so, make Canada better known to the world.

–Jill Heinerth, Explorer-in-Residence





THE ROYAL CANADIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY WILL ENGAGE CANADIANS WITH A COMMITMENT TO:

Lifelong learning

The Society will be the national voice on geography education, by sharing policy, pedagogy and practice in multiple jurisdictions across Canada through provincial and territorial representation in Canadian Geographic Education, and by:

1. Creating meaningful opportunities for engaging with and discovering the powerful relevance of geography and geospatial technologies, both indoors and outdoors, in schools and communities, in Canada and around the world;
2. Working with provincial/territorial ministries and educators to inform curriculum development and pedagogical practice;
3. Offering high-quality professional development programs for educators, incorporating the latest educational and geographical research; and
4. Developing digital educational resources to make learning even more accessible, ensuring that those resources are authoritative, support geographic literacy and are tailored to inform and excite our many and varied audiences nationwide to support lifelong geographic learning.





GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

I hated geography when I went to school. Like so many of the courses I took, we [First Nations] were not there. The Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada was an opportunity to tell Canadians, but also our own people, that our relationship to this land is sacred and important.

—Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of Indspire



A healthier planet

As a leading educational organization with strong digital reach, the Society is ideally suited to leverage geography to help Canadians address the challenges and embrace the opportunities of a more sustainable future by:

1. Reinforcing its leadership role in geographic content curation with our respect for the environment and nature;
2. Fostering inclusive engagement across and within Canada's diverse communities to promote geographic and environmental awareness and stewardship;
3. Being a trusted partner to convene a wide range of stakeholders to influence policy and program development related to our environment; and
4. Encouraging Canadians to manage our natural resources to protect biodiversity, address climate change and foster innovation for a sustainable and prosperous future.





GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

The study of geography helps us build a deeper understanding of how we live together, providing us a clearer and necessary sense of direction for the future. All the work of the RCGS is educational.

Its mission has always been to make Canada better known to Canadians and the world. Notably, Canadian Geographic, one of Canada's most trusted and beloved magazines, has been encouraging exploration and enabling discovery for 90 years.

—the late Alex Trebek, Honorary President, 2016-2020

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Belonging

The Society will unite Canadians in a shared mission to gain a deeper understanding of our identity, country and vibrant cultures through:

1. Storytelling about people, places and things, particularly in ways that will seek to further Canadians' connection with the land, air, water and each other;
2. Cultivating a vibrant Society of diversity and inclusion of gender, sexual orientation, Indigenous Peoples, racialized groups and communities, people with disabilities and the economically disadvantaged;
3. Engaging with new Canadians to support their journeys in Canada and energizing an active citizenry; and
4. Sharing compelling experiences at Canada's Centre for Geography and Exploration, to nurture a learning mindset, inspire relentless problem solvers and build community.

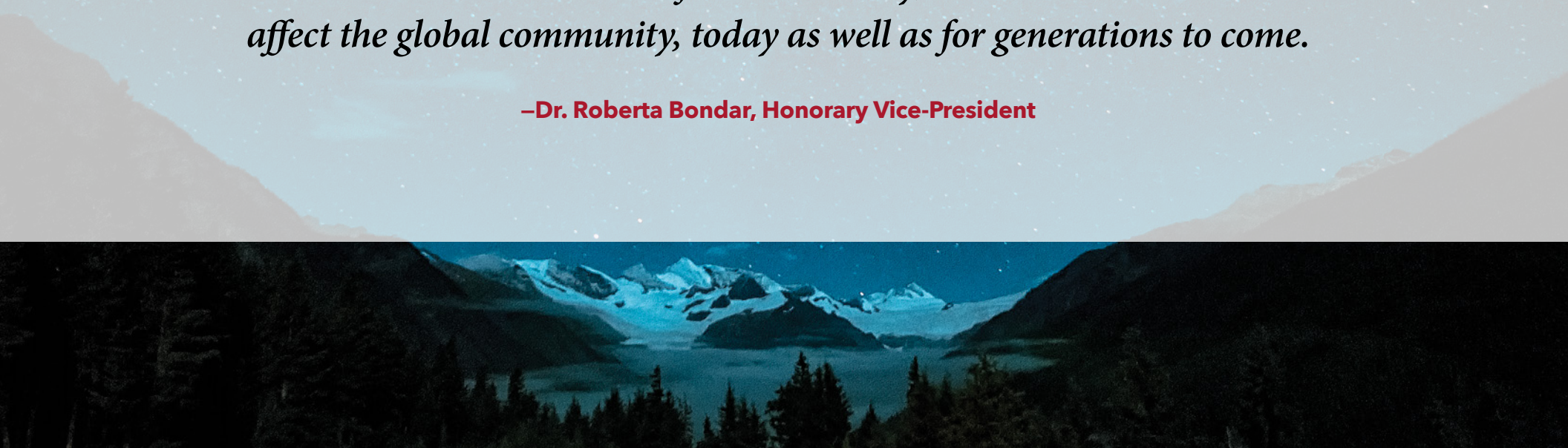




GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

“After observing the planet for eight days from space, I have a deeper interest and respect for the forces that shape our world. Each particle of soil, each plant and animal is special. I also marvel at the creativity and ingenuity of our own species, but at the same time, I wonder why we all cannot see that we create our future each day, and that our local actions affect the global community, today as well as for generations to come.”

—Dr. Roberta Bondar, Honorary Vice-President

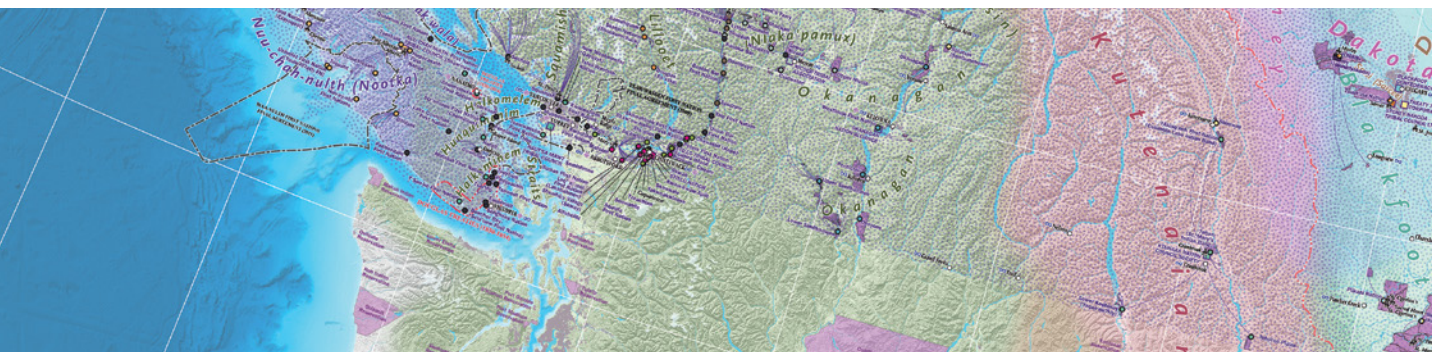




Truth and Reconciliation

To advance Truth and Reconciliation, while honouring and acknowledging the lives and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples by:

1. Expanding the reach of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*, with the goal of ensuring the publication and associated resources are available in every school across the country;
2. Growing our relationships with Indigenous peoples, Nations, communities and organizations throughout Canada, understanding and respecting Elders and collaborating to develop opportunities where Indigenous youth and communities thrive;
3. Developing new educational programs to increase knowledge and learnings that guide and support Canadians, and the country as a whole, on our collective paths to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action; and
4. Seeking and understanding ways of knowing from Indigenous knowledge keepers, including the importance of land stewardship, wildlife, freshwater lakes, coastlines and more, across all ecosystems.





GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

The RCGS is an organization that has done so very much over so many years to contribute to Canadians' understanding of the exceptionally large and stunningly beautiful space they are fortunate to live in.

—Margaret Atwood, writer and Gold Medalist



Discovering

Recognizing that a great source of joy is in discovering the world around us, the Society commits to:

1. Continuing to support scientific research and adventurous expeditions;
2. Broadening Canadians' knowledge and appreciation of Canada through various media;
3. Partnering to encourage Canadians and international travelers to venture out into Canada and the world in person, or as required during public health crises virtually or using distance alternatives, promoting responsible tourism and adventure travel; and
4. Growing our inspiring Explorers-in-Residence and Photographers-in-Residence programs.





GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

While human presence has usually shaped geography, Canada has been largely shaped by geography. Finding common purpose for diverse people inhabiting a vast space has required an understanding and embrace of our territory, much of which I have been privileged to visit during my career. I am grateful to RCGS for its commitment to informing Canadians about our geographical heritage and to celebrating and preserving it.

**–Hon. John Manley, PC, OC, FRCGS, Senior Adviser Bennett Jones LLP,
Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance**



A vibrant RCGS

The sustainability of the Society requires creating value and:

1. Ensuring financial resilience through increasing strategic partnerships, donations, sponsorships, and memberships to sustain and expand the programs of the Society while also evolving new business models and offerings;
2. Increasing engagement and impact by further mobilizing the College of Fellows as the voting members of the Society;
3. Expanding public reach, influence and impact both within Canada and abroad, measured in part through growing membership, readership, education networks, donors and social media; and
4. Recognizing outstanding achievement in the field of geography and in support of the Society.





GAINING INSPIRATION FROM OUR RCGS COMMUNITY

When flying over the lands and waters of Inuit Nunangat, our homeland, an outsider might just see rocks, snow or tundra. Inuit see our home. We recognize the places where we fish, hunt or gather berries, the places where our families have traveled for generations following the seasonal changes of our environment. It is this spirit of Inuit Nunangat that we are proud to offer a glimpse of through the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada. We hope that we can also share insights into our history and our political desires for unity and self-determination.

—Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami





In 2029, the Society will mark its 100th year. Using the roadmap articulated in this plan, the Society will aspire to help Canadians reimagine what geography means to them. More expansively, we will advance the important role of geography in the public consciousness. And, in doing so, we will help Canadians learn more about the intersection between our human and physical landscapes, ensuring they have the knowledge and understanding to prepare themselves for whatever the future brings.

This strategic plan will guide the Society's activities for the next five years. With Board oversight, a committed staff, enthusiastic Fellows, dedicated educators, inspiring explorers, captivating photographers, distinguished field scientists, outcome-driven partners, young geographers, wise storytellers, generous volunteers and an engaged community, we are committing to facing the most challenging issues of our time squarely, bringing the interdisciplinary strength of geography to bear on the matters that face us now and in the future. We are confident that we will achieve great things together.

While the strategic objectives and priorities articulated in the plan provide a framework for the future we aspire to, this plan should be seen as a living document that will be reviewed and adapted in response to opportunities aligned with the Society's mission, vision and values, as we chart the next 100 years.

When we succeed, we will improve our lives and those of future generations.

Thank you. Merci.



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