

William C. Wonders
1924-2011



The University community was saddened to hear of William C. Wonders' death on 24 January 2011. Bill's association with the University of Alberta was long and rewarding and began in 1953, when as an Assistant Professor of Geography, Department of Political Economy, he established the first courses in Geography. His PhD in Geography, awarded from the Geography Department, University of Toronto in 1951 focussed on the climate of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. In 1957 (and until 1967) he was the founding Head of the newly formed Department of Geography at the University of Alberta.

An excellent organizer with a vision, he was the founding chairman of the Directorate of the Boreal Institute in 1960, now the Canadian Circumpolar Institute (CCI). He continued as a member of the institute's directorate until 1968. In 2010, the Canadian Circumpolar Institute celebrated its 50th anniversary and was delighted to have both William and Lillian Wonders present for the opening of the joint CCI – UAlberta Museums exhibit "Polar Impact." Bill gave a short retrospective on the formation of a northern institute at the university (Founding of the Boreal Institute).

Bill was also involved as the founding chairman for the Canadian Institute for Nordic Studies (CINS) in 1987. Another of his many accomplishments included Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Atlas of Alberta Project (1964-69) and member of the Junior Atlas of Alberta Project. His fascination with maps was shared with his spouse Lillian, a cartographer in her own right who also taught at the University and resulted in The William C Wonders Map Collection, a major university collection of international renown.

Bill published widely, authoring books, book chapters, monographs, and peer-reviewed articles. He edited several books, including northern-related titles, including Canada's Changing North. Named member to the Order of Canada in 1999, William C. Wonders was recognized often throughout his career and awarded numerous honours and awards. Some of these include: Elected Fellow, Royal Society of Canada (1979), Alberta Achievement Award (1980), honorary doctorate (Fil. Dr. hc) Uppsala University (1981), Massey Medal (1998), Queen's Jubilee Medal (2000) and named "Distinguished University Professor Emeritus" University of Alberta (2009). Bill retired from the University of Alberta in 1987. Over the course of his 35 years at the University he provided the academic leadership that developed a leading Geography Department and saw the foundation of important northern-related institutes such as the CCI and CINS. The University of Alberta and affiliated research communities have lost a well-recognized leading Canadian geographer and friend. His impact to the science remains and will be long remembered.

*Credits to the University of Alberta
Canadian Circumpolar Institute*
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/CCI/nav01.cfm?nav01=101724>