

Dr. Douglas Day, 1939- 2017

Professor Emeritus, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

Douglas was the first Chair of the Department of Geography established in 1975, now the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies. He came to Saint Mary's in 1973 charged specifically with the task of setting up the department. He held bachelors and doctoral degrees from the Universities of Leicester and Sheffield, respectively. He also held a post-graduate teaching certificate from Leicester. He immigrated to Canada in 1967 to take up a faculty position in the Department of Geography at Memorial University in St. John's. For the 40th Anniversary celebration of the Saint Mary's department held in 2015 Douglas remembered his early pioneering work. In his own words he said:

Saint Mary's University advertised for a geographer to develop a department in 1973. At that time, I was a national economic policy adviser with the first Trudeau government and employed with the federal Department of Finance in Ottawa. Owen Carrigan was President of SMU and he obviously liked the idea of appointing a geographer with a public policy bent.

Brian Robinson, then in the Department of Anthropology, joined Doug in teaching geography courses in 1973, but as Doug put it "The major question for me was how to achieve an enrolment growth and an impact outside the University that would justify additional faculty". He developed a working relationship with the provincial Department of Education through Glenda Redden, the province's social studies co-ordinator, and Robin Crickmer, a high school geography teacher. Saint Mary's began to offer evening, extension centre and summer school courses in geography for teachers to upgrade their qualifications to teach geography in the province's high schools. With increases in enrolment, Hugh Millward and Bob McCalla joined the University and in 1975 the Department was officially launched. Doug attracted teachers to upgrade their qualifications, and also secured funding through the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to develop teaching materials for high school courses in urban and rural geography. Doug also cemented relations with both Saint Mary's and Dalhousie's Faculties of Education, especially with Dalhousie's Dr. Stuart Semple, the geography methods instructor there. All of these initiatives did much to get the Department of Geography off the ground and ensure its future.

In the early years Douglas taught at all undergraduate levels. The introductory Geography of Canada course had over 100 enrolments in many years – 100 was a large number in those days! He also taught geographical mapping techniques and conducted field trips in many of his courses. Douglas' main academic interest was in the oceans. He taught courses on the geography of the oceans and fisheries management. He was particularly interested in policy perspectives and their geographical impact. Students were greatly attracted to these courses, with some going on to careers in the field of ocean resource management. On his retirement from Saint Mary's in 1999 a one day symposium was held in his honour focussed on ocean's issues. Many of his former students spoke.

In 2009 Douglas was honoured as the first recipient of the Atlantic Association of Geographer's Stuart Semple Award for Contributions to Geography Education. It was a fitting tribute for the person responsible for establishing the Saint Mary's department and fostering the growth of geographical education in Nova Scotia and beyond.

Douglas Day died, at home in Shelburne, Nova Scotia on October 10, 2017 with Judith, his wife of 54 years, and their three children Simon, Tara and Graeme at his side.

