



ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES  
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

*Award for Excellence in Teaching*  
*2012*  
*Distinguished Teaching Award*

**DR. COLIN LAROQUE**

Enthusiasm and sincerity are the characteristics students and colleagues most often note about Colin Laroque, Associate Professor and Head of Mount Allison's Geography and Environment Department. Whether teaching beside a glacier in the Rockies, in his research lab, or in the classroom, Dr. Laroque is known for his passion—for the discipline and for his students' learning.

Colin Laroque's easy communication style, sense of humour and openness help him relate to students on a personal, human level: inspiring excitement about the material, connecting them with the environment, and making them feel included in a classroom community. Colin is also open to learn everything that students can teach him, and he continuously refines his teaching based on their feedback.

Colin's approach to teaching is grounded in his First Nations heritage. He learned about the natural environment by experiencing it, listening to his grandfather's stories, touching a paw print in the snow, and questioning his elders. It is no surprise, then, that he is a strong proponent of experiential learning. He challenges himself to amplify students' natural curiosity and make the content relevant; he even takes a video camera wherever he is researching and films unusual environmental phenomena for use in his classes. At every opportunity, he tries to take students outside the classroom. Most notably, he has developed a week-long, intensive field course in Jasper National Park, which participants have described as the highlight of their Mount Allison careers.

Colin balances cutting-edge research with exceptional teaching, and the two intersect in his supervision of undergraduate student researchers. The high standards he sets, coupled with constructive feedback, lead his students to take enormous pride in their achievements. He encourages and supports their attendance at conferences, where they are often the only undergraduates giving presentations, and many later receive accolades in their graduate studies.

At the heart of Colin's work is the Mount Allison Dendrochronology Lab (the MAD Lab) where students may identify the world's oldest hockey stick or the oldest stand of trees on PEI, or may help historians discover when timber was cut to make the roof on a pre-deportation Acadian house in Nova Scotia. Their research has been featured on several television documentaries.

In 2011, Colin received the Herbert and Leota Tucker Teaching Award, Mount Allison's most prestigious recognition of teaching excellence. The citation includes this typical student comment: "I feel that I am a far better person for knowing, working with and learning from Colin. I consider him a mentor and a friend." For his part, following the path of his own most influential teachers, Colin Laroque's instructional goal is "to be the best academic 'elder' I can be."

Dr. Colin Laroque is, indeed, a worthy recipient of the 2012 Association of Atlantic Universities Distinguished Teaching Award.