

Peter G. Holland (1939-2019)



Peter in the Hocken Archives, University of Otago

A Kiwi from Waimate, Canterbury, South Island, Peter Holland came to McGill in 1967 after completing a PhD at the Australian National University on the mallee vegetation of southern Australia. At McGill, Peter created a program in biogeography and his scholarly contributions were marked by an evolutionary perspective, and the insights of 'island biogeography' and systems modelling of the 1960s.

In Canadian forests – beginning at Mont Saint-Hilaire – Peter focused on the demography of a little spring-flowering bulb (trout lily or *Erythronium*). To test ideas about glacial refugia, he launched a series of transplant experiments that kept him working his way east every spring with snow down the back of his neck. At McGill he supervised or co-supervised six MSc students and one PhD student and was very active in mentoring, encouraging and counseling many others.

Seconded to the University of Nairobi as part of a Rockefeller Foundation program (1971-1973), Peter organized a field course for 110 students and sparked a newsletter for teachers of geography. On return to McGill he took a strong role in preparations to host a stream of graduate students from Kenya; with support from CIDA and the Ford Foundation, the program lasted 20 years.

In 1979, Peter returned to New Zealand, first to a position at the University of Canterbury (Christchurch), in 1982 to the University of Otago (Dunedin), where he shared major team efforts to document regional environmental histories, transformations of grasslands and pasture plants. He returned to McGill in 1987-88 and continued to work with Sherry Olson on the environmental history of New Zealand.

McGill University and the Department of Geography pass on our condolences to Peter's family, friends and colleagues in New Zealand.