

AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

edition



Students

making a difference

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From the Dean's desk

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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COVER PHOTO: Professor David J. Lewis, Associate Dean Student Affairs, is joined by some of the recipients of McGill Entrance Scholarships. The academic achievements of 115 students were recognized at the 2008-2009 Macdonald Scholastic Awards Reception in October, where \$175,000 in scholarships and awards were given out.

PHOTO: OWEN EGAN

Dear Graduates and Friends,

We have had several memorable events this Fall.

I am pleased to report on the success of the McGill Conference on Global Food Security held in late September. The conference brought together some 400 participants from 17 countries to discuss solutions to the international food crisis. Hailed as the first gathering of its type in



Dean Chandra Madramootoo and Kanayo F. Nwanze, Vice-President, International Fund for Agricultural Development.

the world, the conference concluded with the presentation of a five-point plan of action. It also placed Macdonald College in a privileged position of being a world leader in identifying, defining and offering solutions to global food concerns. More details about the conference, including the presentations and conference report can be found at www.mcgill.ca/globalfoodsecurity.

The excellence of our students was exemplified in October, when 115 students were presented with medals, scholarships and fellowships during the 2008-2009 Macdonald Scholastic Awards Reception. Congratulations to these outstanding students. This issue of *In Focus* spotlights some of the initiatives of our students in helping to improve the world.

A significant moment at Homecoming in October was the unveiling of the statue of Sir William Macdonald, in front of the Macdonald Stewart Complex. The statue has become a defining landmark on campus, and will serve as a permanent reminder of Sir William's vision and generosity. Equally momentous at Homecoming was the unveiling of the Sir William Macdonald Giving Society's Donor Wall, which identifies the donors who have made annual fund gifts for five or more consecutive years. This not only recognizes the generosity of our very loyal and committed donors, but also serves as a permanent reminder to our students of the contributions that are being made by many, including our alumni, to the quality of the education which they are receiving. This ongoing philanthropy is another tribute to the original foundations laid by Sir William Macdonald.

During Homecoming, we honoured five distinguished Mac alumni, who have made enormous contributions to the well being of society and their professions. What always impresses me is how much these awardees recall with fondness their formative years at Mac, and how their Mac education played such a large role in shaping their successes.

I close by once again thank you for your continued support of Mac, and I wish you all the best for 2009.

Chandra A. Madramootoo, BSc(AgrEng)'77, MSc'81, PhD'85 Dean, Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Chandre A. Madramotos

Conference on food crisis hailed as a success

cGill University's Conference on Global Food Security, organized by the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences between September 24 and 26, was hailed as a resounding success, as the three-day event concluded with the presentation of a global plan of action.

Bringing together some 400 people from 17 countries, the conference provided an important forum for direct exchange between experts, scholars and policy makers. Also attending were representatives from 18 international organizations, including NGOs, farmers' organizations and business communities from developed and developing countries, as well as a host of students. Participants hope that the conference will provide the basis for sustainable solutions to declining world food stocks and sharply rising food prices.

Causes and effects of the global food crisis

One of the points raised during the conference is that the world has experienced similar situations of food insecurity and scarcity, in the late 1950s and in the mid-1970s. Over the past 30 years, investments in agriculture and food production have declined. This has been coupled with a decline in Official Development Assistance funding from 18 per cent to less than 4 per cent of the total ODA from the countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In developing countries, agriculture contributes 29 per cent of gross domestic products, although developing countries have invested less than 4 per cent of GDP in agriculture.

The way forward: an action plan introduced at conference

The conference closed with the introduction of a five-point action plan that responded to the need for a variety of solutions tailored to each situation. Here is a summary of those recommendations:

- 1. Agriculture has been an engine for development in Europe and North America and parts of Asia. In this context, there is an urgent need to reinforce the importance of the agricultural sector for economic growth in developing countries. This will invigorate economies and generate wealth to help battle poverty.
- 2. There is a dire need for increased investment in rural infrastructure (roads, power, irrigation, post-harvest storage and distribution, processing facilities) for agricultural production, and



The McGill Conference on Global Food Security gave all participants the opportunity to exchange ideas and offer solutions to the food crisis.

for research and development, and building capacity.

- 3. Government policies should allow farmers to take advantage of local, regional and international market opportunities, through the provision of credit, regulatory and fiscal frameworks, pillars of environmental sustainability, risk management, and rights to resources.
- 4. International and local relief organizations should be supported in their efforts to provide immediate relief for vulnerable populations, and assist them in building their assets and productive capacity to transition into a level of food security.
- 5. Special attention should be paid to sound feeding programs for children to reduce the negative long-term effects of malnutrition on human development.

For more information about the conference, a report on the proceedings, as well as key findings and recommendations, visit: www.mcgill.ca/globalfoodsecurity/.

'It's not about pity...'

SARAH LEE, MSc INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The sight remains seared in Sarah Lee's memory: a group of exhausted African women, taking turns pumping water, non-stop, for 24 hours a day, in extreme heat from the village's only functioning well.

"I still remember seeing those women, pumping water, night and day. One day the pump broke and they immediately started using the rope-and-pulley system," recalls Lee, 25. "Using these ropes destroys your hands."

For Lee, who grew up in the tiny town of Deep River, in the northern reaches of Ontario, it is a vision that has helped shape her view of how vital water is to the very essence of existence. And it has made her humble in her approach to development work overseas.

In September 2005, Lee travelled to The Gambia as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer (she has dual U.S.-Canadian citizenship), where she spent the next 18 months in the village of Kerr Alhagi Mallick, followed by a six-month relief stint in Senegal. While she was in Africa to assist villages in implementing water-extraction and agro-forestry techniques, she quickly realized that it was the Africans themselves who taught her what she needed to know about water and effecting social change.

"I woke up every morning to an empty bucket of water next to me, which I had to fill. I learned to fetch water every day, in the heat, in the sun," said Lee. "I learned that without water, you can't do anything else."

"When I first arrived, I thought all I had to do was water my garden and everything would be fine. But my garden died because we were only fetching small amounts of water a day. I learned from that experience."

Lee stands out as a determined and socially conscious woman, who forged tight bonds with the men and women she worked and lived with in Africa. She studied sociology and international relations at Cornell University before embarking on her master's degree at Macdonald Campus in September.



Describing her African mission as the "highlight of my life," Lee has the honour of being one of the first recipients of a Zavalkoff Family Foundation bursary, which funds travel and research for a Mac Water Resources Management post-graduate students performing development work in Israel. She will travel to Israel in the summer.

While in The Gambia, Lee realized that water shortage is not the issue – accessibility is. "You had 700 people in my village, and the water was 35 metres below ground. Getting it is the problem."

The village was equipped with three hand pumps, two of which broke down one day. That is when Lee saw how hard the women in the village would work on the lone pump, just to obtain water.

"The impact of water scarcity is high on the minds of everyone, both here and around the world," she said. "I want to be a part of it, being there to help. It's not about pity; it's about doing great things."

Have energy, will build farm

JOLIANNE DEMERS, BSc(AgEnvSci) JONATHAN BRUDERLEIN, BSc(AgEnvSci)

hey've got vision, enthusiasm and boundless energy.

Now, all they have to do is find a place to build their farm.

Meet Jolianne Demers and Jonathan Bruderlein – a pair of inspiring Macdonald sparkplugs with a passion for the art of farming and a dream that they are meticulously crafting while pursuing their studies at Mac.

"It is a daunting task, but it is something we will do," says Swissborn Bruderlein, 22, describing the young couple's plans to start their farm in Quebec upon graduation. "A generation ago, families would continue on with the farm tradition, but now it is different. We are planning for it. We are the future of farming."

Their story has all the makings of a great romance novel. Country boy Bruderlein meets city girl Demers at Mac. They fall in love and combine their passion for organic farming with an aim for the greater good – to feed people and to maintain the rich tradition of Canadian farming. Along the way, they spend their summers working on various farms in the region to learn the ropes of a craft that, according to Bruderlein, "is often idealized." It is while doing every type of thankless and dirty job at these farms that Bruderlein and Demers have learned the essentials: planning irrigation, producing seedlings, building greenhouses, preparing the fields and everything in between.

"What I'm really after is the know-how," says Bruderlein. "Self-sufficiency is good, but at the end of the day you have to make money."

That is why he and Demers are working on a business plan that will outline exactly what they have in mind. They credit Mac professor Caroline Begg for helping them put together their plan, which will introduce two farm options: a vegetable farm, or a vegetable and lamb farm.

"Once you know what you want to do, you've got to go out and



get it," said Demers. He adds, "[The plan] will also serve as a tool for other students in the future. Caroline Begg has been amazing for us."

While Demers hails from Montreal's East End, her mother grew up on a farm and warned her that it was a difficult life. That didn't seem to sway her from working on a farm before deciding to enroll at Mac. "I decided to try it out, and I loved it," she says. "After that, I decided to come to McGill."

She and Bruderlein live with five other Mac students in a residence in Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue that is owned by *la ferme coopérative Tourne-Sol*, a group of young agriculturalists dedicated to the promotion of organic farming in Quebec. The organization has been a fixture of the couple's life during their time at Mac.

"If you want the knowledge, find it and get it," said Bruderlein. "Mac has helped us a lot this way. Our exposure to conferences has also been a big help. We know we still have lots more to learn, but we are ready to do this."

Water is his passion

YONG-TAT TAN, BSc(AgEnvSci)

t 20, Yong-Tat Tan is facing a difficult decision. The soft-spoken, second-year Macdonald microbiology student knows he eventually wants to work in Ghana or Burkina Faso, where poverty and a lack of access to water have greatly undermined the development of both countries.

So he is certain of his goal, but the best way to make a difference in Africa is less clear. That is because Tan has two passions in life: providing first-aid care and dealing with issues related to soil and water. The dilemma is deciding which of his talents would best benefit the most vulnerable and poorest people in underdeveloped countries.

Fortunately, his experiences at Mac have revealed that there is a simple solution to his problem. The skills and tools he is acquiring through his studies are helping him to pursue both of his interests, at the same time.

"I believe that opportunity can be so many things. I also believe I can use both of my passions, together, in my work overseas," says Tan, a Red Cross-trained first-aid responder. "My goal is to be a paramedic, but it is also to help people, in whatever capacity."

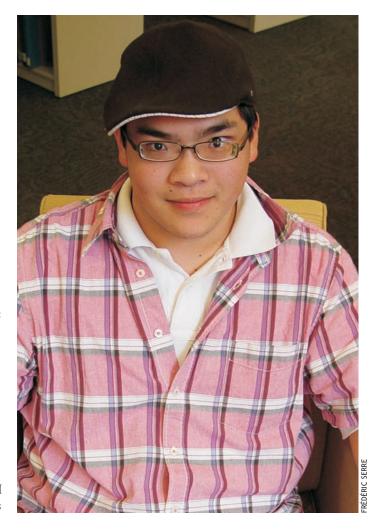
Tan says he was attracted to Macdonald because of his love for water – a love that was reinforced by his parents' simple notion as he grew up: never waste.

"If you don't have access to water, what do you have?" said Tan.
"I've never taken water for granted. I find it absurd that we sell it in bottles. It should be free."

Three years ago, he joined Engineers Without Borders (EWB) Canada – an organization that opened his eyes to technological opportunities that can solve the simplest, yet most complex, development and sanitation problems.

As vice-president of Mac's EWB chapter, he is part of a team that has joined forces with John Abbott College students to build a treadle pump, or, as Tan likes to call it "a water Stairmaster," because the operator of the pump stands inside the structure, using his feet to extract water.

The project is teaching students about building a tool that can



solve crucial irrigation problems. "Instead of two weeks to irrigate, it takes only four hours with this treadle pump," says Tan.

The project is an initiative that the students launched themselves. Tan says the pump, which is still under construction, serves as inspiration for students like himself who want to make a difference in the world.

On the back of Tan's EWB business card reads this message: "Poverty is not about weakness. Poverty is an absence of opportunity."

"I really believe that," says Tan. "We have opportunities to help people with our technology and our ability to learn. I have always been taught that out there in the world, there are others who are less fortunate, and who lack the most basic needs. If you don't have access to water, you don't have access to life. It's as simple as that.

"I feel privileged to be at a time in my life when I can make a difference," says Tan.

K U D O S...

International honours for Chandra Madramootoo

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) is proud to announce the election of Professor **Chandra Madramootoo**, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, as President for a three year-term, between 2008 and 2011. "This is a great step forward for Canada following the leadership tradition that has been the hall of fame for Canada to play a major role in ICID since its inception 60 years ago," announced Laurie Tollefson of the Canadian National Committee of ICID. "Canada has had several prominent Canadians serving in the ICID. Canada's activities in ICID are widely spread, reflecting the varied Canadian interests and experiences in irrigation, drainage and flood management. "It has included hosting three major events: the International Executive Council in Edmonton, the Americas Regional meeting in Ottawa, and the 18th Congress of the ICID in Montreal," added Mr. Tollefson.





David Bird receives Tom Cade Award

Professor **David M. Bird**, MSc'76, PhD'78, of the Avian Science and Conservation Centre was presented with the Tom Cade Award during the annual meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. in Missoula, Montana in September. This award recognizes significant contributions in the area of captive propagation and reintroduction of birds of prey. Besides maintaining a colony of captive-breeding American Kestrels for over 35 years at Macdonald, Dr. Bird breeds and releases endangered bird species native to Quebec, notably the Peregrine Falcon and the Loggerhead Shrike. He also produced the world's first falcon from artificial insemination.

Katherine Gray-Donald new CSNS president

Professor **Katherine Gray-Donald**, BSc'69, PhD'84, of the School of Dietetics and Human Nutrition has been named president of the Canadian Society for Nutritional Sciences (CSNS). The CSNS has been in existence since 1957 and is a member society of the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies; it represents nutritional scientists in academia, government, industry, hospitals and research institutes.



from Regis Tremblay and Marc St-Roch of CRAAQ

FMT student Eric Simpson wins 2008 Place aux jeunes award

On November 20, **Eric Simpson**, a 2008 graduate from the Farm Management and Technology program was awarded the 2008 *Place aux jeunes* prize. The *Place aux jeunes* contest is organized jointly by the *Centre de référence en agriculture et agroalimentaire du Québec (CRAAQ)* and *UPA-Services de fiscalité agricole* and is meant to recognize the college-level graduating student who has developed the best business plan for integrating into their families farm, or for starting a new farm. The prize, which is composed of \$1,000 of financial consulting from *UPA-Services de fiscalité agricole*

and a \$1,000 bursary, was awarded following Eric's presentation at the *Colloque de l'entrepreneur gestionnaire*. The award was presented by last year's winner, **Katia Colton-Gagnon**, who is currently enrolled as an agronomy student at Macdonald.

FMT students receive awards and bursaries

Twenty-three Farm Management and Technology students and three McGill undergrads received awards and bursaries during a special event held at Macdonald Campus November 7, during the annual general meeting of the Quebec Farmers' Association. Sponsors of the awards presentation included Coopérative Agropur, Coop Fédérée, la Fondation du salon de l'agriculture, Farm Credit Canada and Saputo, Inc.



Sir William comes home



The bronze statue of Sir William Macdonald, designed by sculptor Tino Petronzio (2nd from right), is unveiled at Homecoming by Chandra Madramootoo, Helen Tyros of BMO Bank of Montreal and William Ritchie.

acdonald alumni gathered with local dignitaries, politicians and McGill University officials, faculty and staff to pay tribute to the founder of Macdonald Campus during the unveiling of a statue on October 18 as part of Homecoming celebrations.

"This is a very proud and significant moment in the history of this campus," said Dean Chandra Madramootoo. "The unveiling of Sir William C. Macdonald's statue is our way of celebrating his life and accomplishments, and it is a special way to cap last year's centennial anniversary of this campus."

The bilingual inscription at the foot of the statue reads: "Founder of Macdonald College, Chancellor of McGill University, and one of Canada's foremost educational philanthropists, Sir William C. Macdonald shall be remembered as a visionary who was deeply committed to the cause of education. May this statue forever be a symbol of our gratitude towards his memory, his work and his legacy."

Sincere appreciation is extended to our loyal donors, who contributed to the statue. They include: BMO Bank of Montreal, Lorna and Bill Ritchie,

BSc(Agr)'51, the Classes of 1951 and 1963, the McGill Associates, the Maurice Massé Endowment Fund, and all Mac graduates who made annual donations. Thank you!



Inauguration of Macdonald Giving Society's Donor Wall

t was a proud and uplifting moment on October 18, as about 50 Mac alumni, staff, students and friends crowded the entrance of the Macdonald Stewart Building to witness the official unveiling of the Sir William Macdonald Giving Society's Donor Wall, which identifies the 164 donors who have made Annual Fund gifts for five or more consecutive years.

The ceremony featured a ribbon-cutting, as well as the presentation of a display of some of Sir William Macdonald's personal artifacts, including his famous hat, glasses and stationery.

The people whose names appear on the two donor walls carry on Macdonald's tradition of philanthropy through their annual gifts to the university. "They are our loyal donors who give back to their alma mater each and every year," reads the Donor Wall tribute. "For this we recognize them as members of the Sir William Macdonald Giving Society."



Lori Yersh, BA'87, MEd'92,MEd'97, representing Development and Alumni Relations, and Bruce Bolton, BSc'72, of The Macdonald Stewart Foundation, cut the ribbon inaugurating the Donor Wall.

Five alumni honoured at Homecoming











Byron Beeler

George Bovell

Margaret (Peggy) Bovell

Mairi Matheson

Alton McEwen

uring this year's Homecoming, Macdonald paid tribute to five outstanding alumni. On October 18 Macdonald Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented during the annual Sir William Macdonald Luncheon attended by more than 300 people at the Centennial Centre Ballroom. Since 2006, when the first Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented to deserving Mac grads, the public recognition of exceptional alumni has been a proud highlight of each Homecoming celebration.

The 2008 Macdonald Distinguished Alumni Awards recipients were Byron E. Beeler, BSc(Agr)'58, George L. Bovell, BSc(Agr)'45, Margaret Bovell, BSc(HEc)'44, MSc'46, Mairi Elizabeth Matheson, BSc(HEc)'56 and Alton W. McEwen, BSc(Agr)'66. These recipients have represented the University with dignity and have pursued careers marked by excellence, while never forgetting their Mac roots.

The Macdonald Distinguished Alumni Awards were created by the Macdonald Branch of the McGill Alumni Association to recognize distinguished graduates who have made outstanding contributions. "Today, we honour five graduates whose accomplishments are of such excellence that they provide inspiration and leadership to future generations of Macdonald graduates," said Steve Olive, BSc(Agr)'68, newly elected president of the Mac Branch, and master of ceremonies of the luncheon.

To read the bios of the 2008 awards recipients, visit www.mcgill.ca/macdonald/about/awards/alumni/.

Confirm 18th, 2009 Program of the proof on the stand of Color - Switch and S

Dean Chandra Madramootoo (left) and Steve Olive, BSc(Agr)'68, (right) accept a cheque from Donald McOuat, BSc(Agr)'53, presented on behalf of the Class of '53

Reunion Class Giving

Ann Cutler Hyde Class of '53 Bursary

On November 29, 2007, the Mac community lost a devoted and much-loved friend when **Ann Cutler Hyde** passed away. The **Class of '53** decided to honour their long-serving secretary by renaming the **Class of '53 Book Prize** to the **Ann Cutler Hyde Class of '53 Bursary**. During Homecoming, members of the Class of '53 presented a cheque for \$16,208.50 towards the bursary.

The **Class of '58** raised \$36,266 for the Macdonald Library and Learning Centre, the Helen Neilson Scholarship and Bob Pugh Scholarship; the **Class of '63** raised \$21,000 towards the Sir William Macdonald statue; the **Class of '68** presented a cheque that brought the total raised for the Oval Award since 1998 to \$90,710; **Class of '73** added \$52,526 to the Macdonald Library Fund. Thank you for your support!

Zavalkoff Family Foundation's gift to Mac stands tall

bout 50 years ago, Norman Zavalkoff, BCom'57, was a young sports editor at the *McGill Daily*. He was also the university's yearbook editor.

"I loved putting the paper to bed," recalls Zavalkoff. "We put in a lot of hours. But it was a great time, and it expanded my mind."

Five decades later, as he celebrates the 50th anniversary of his McGill graduation, Zavalkoff has decided to give something back to the school by donating \$500,000 through his family foundation to two McGill faculties – Medicine and Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Chairman and CEO of Groupe Presud, Inc., Zavalkoff points to a photo of his adult children – Brian and Anne, who were instrumental in deciding how a gift from their family foundation would be distributed.

"My kids are very important to me," he says. "Even though they live outside Montreal, I had feedback from them. It was entirely a family decision."

That decision ensures that Zavalkoff's \$500,000 gift will have an enormous impact on students' lives on both sides of the Atlantic, as it recognizes and promotes academic exchanges between Canada and Israel by funding research and travel between McGill, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the Weizmann Institute of Science.



Supporting graduate or postdoctoral students, the gift will be divided as follows: a \$300,000 endowed gift to the Faculty of Medicine, and a \$200,000 endowed gift to the Norman Zavalkoff Family Foundation Travel Fund for Water Resources Management at Macdonald.

"The chance to travel and be part of an exchange is an incredible thing. I want students to have the opportunity to experience this," says Zavalkoff. He is pleased that his gift will help create some defining moments in others' lives.

"It is my hope that there might be other people who have success out there, who will do the same thing," he says. "This is a very enriching experience."

Bob Pugh Scholarship Fund gets \$60,000 boost from loyal Mac grads

he 2008 Bob Pugh Golf Classic was an overwhelming success, as more than 100 alumni and friends spent September 17 on the links at the Emerald Links Golf and Country Club in Ottawa. After a sun-filled day of bogeys and birdies, the group attended a fabulous fundraising dinner that brought in more than \$15,000. Combined with money raised by Mac graduates who were involved in sports activities with Bob Pugh between 1952 and 1969, \$60,000 has been collected so far towards an overall goal of \$80,000 for the Bob Pugh Scholarship Fund. The cheque was presented to Dean Chandra Madramootoo during Homecoming. Bob Pugh was the tireless Director of Athletics at Macdonald from 1955 to 1969.

The 2009 Bob Pugh Classic will take place on September 10, 2009.



Byron Beeler,BSc(Agr)'58, Gib Patterson, BSc(Agr)'60, Elsie Patterson, Don Grant, BSc(Agr)'60, MSc'62, PhD'66, Emilie Grant, Pat Parker, Bob Pugh, DipEd'52, and Thora Pugh, DipEd'52, present the cheque for the Bob Pugh Scholarship Fund to Dean Madramootoo.

ONE COLLEGE. SIX WORDS. ALUMNI RESPONDED.



Ernest Hemingway famously wrote "For sale: baby shoes, never worn" – and called it a six-word story.

This very economical story format is the basis of McGill's multi-media ad campaign launched last fall.

During Homecoming, we asked our alumni to jot down their six-word stories about what Mac has meant to them. The response was enthusiastic, as we received almost 40 stories. In fact, McGill's Six-Word website (http://sixwords.mcgill.ca) features features more than 600 stories, including a large number of Macdonald entries.

Here are a few of the best six-word stories selected by *In Focus:*

Beautiful green grass, beautiful red roofs. (Jean Stafford, DipEd'46)

Macdonald. Students. Lectures. Campus. Found husband. (Elizabeth MacKenzie, DipEd'58)

Walked on soils of many lands. (Alex Schumacher, BSc(Agr)'68, MSc'74)

Educated as teachers. Learned as farmers. (Fred Wallet, 1962)

Orientation studies. Roommates. Graduation. Pranks. Success.

(Ruth Anne Waddy, BSc(FSc)'73)

Mark your calendars for the 49th Annual Woodsmen Competition!



Macdonald Campus is hosting its 49th annual Intercollegiate Woodsmen Competition, a day-long event that will showcase dozens of students trying to saw, snowshoe and log-roll their way into the record books.

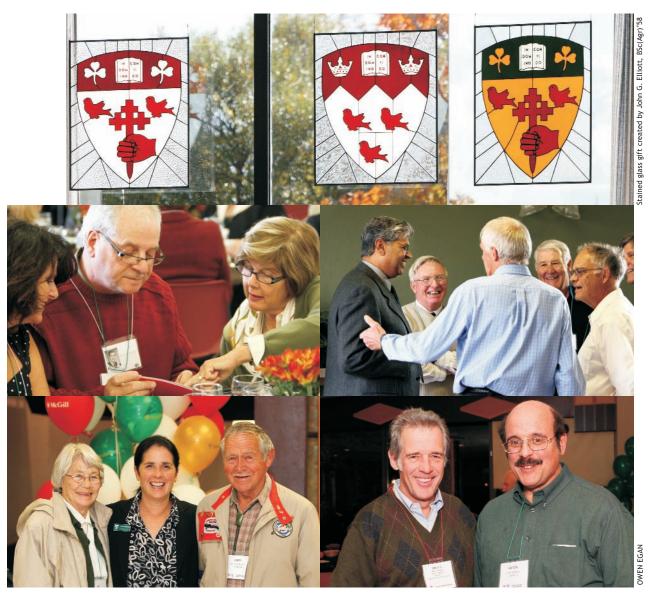
The competition, which will be held on Saturday, Jan. 31 on Watson Field, traditionally brings together university timbersports teams of men and women from Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as a team from State University of New York at Syracuse.



season's greetings

from Dean Chandra Madramootoo, and the faculty, staff and students of Macdonald College

Snapshots from Homecoming ...



Laughter, reuniting with old friends and beautiful weather provided the backdrop for an unforgettable Homecoming 2008, as more than 300 Mac alumni gathered to celebrate the magic of Macdonald College.