
**Geoscience education
in our community**

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Our lives are inextricably linked to the Earth. Everyday conversations, the television, and the newspapers are full of references to earth science – volcanic events, earthquakes, tsunamis, mud slides, availability of underground water, and exploration of other planets. Geological processes have influenced the shape of the land upon which we live and provided resources to fulfill our basic needs. However, many people are not aware of the integral role earth science plays in our lives.

As citizens, we are required to make decisions about socio-scientific aspects of these problems, and frequently, uninformed or misinformed but concerned citizens make these decisions. To make knowledgeable decisions we must critically review all scientific information presented. This means that earth science concepts, and science as a whole, should be understood in a significant way by all citizens.

Nowhere is this more true than in Newfoundland and Labrador. For the last 7500 years, the people of this land have extracted its resources (fish and animals, minerals and rock, oil and gas) to survive. Very few of the residents of our province are aware of the significance that ancient geological processes have played in providing the valuable resources which brought them to this new land in the beginning and upon which they now depend. Nor are they aware of the magnitude of the importance of the rock on which they live.

We must strive for improvements in the earth science education of students, teachers and all residents of this province. Through partnerships within the geoscience community – government, industry, academia, and museums – we can fulfill an important role in promoting the understanding and awareness of earth science. The Geoscape St. John's partnership is an excellent initiative aimed at increasing the awareness of geoscience issues facing the citizens of this community. EdGEO is another such excellent initiative, bringing together partners from all walks of the geoscience community to better the earth science knowledge of teachers in our schools. GEO Classes, offered at the Johnson GEO CENTRE with the assistance of members

of the local geoscience community, are engaging, interactive, hands-on classes aimed at motivating K-12 students in the province to take an interest and see the value in earth science.

There must be a move toward greater scientific literacy, so that earth science teaching becomes more closely focused on preparing all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for life in the scientific and technological world. Together we can turn earth science apprehension into comprehension, and enable our people to adopt values and interests consistent with their being guardians of the present fragile environment of our province and our planet.