

Does Atlantic Canada need its own geology textbook? A proposal for a regionally-focused open textbook

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The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance's recent #TextbookBroke campaign made national headlines by highlighting the financial burden mandatory course materials place upon students. Students in Atlantic Canada are far from insulated from these pressures: a 2017 Maclean's national survey ranked St. Francis Xavier, Cape Breton University, and Memorial University at #2, #11, #12, respectively, for highest average textbook costs (\$917.24– \$876.11/year). Open textbooks provide an alternative to the traditional publishing model and a partial solution to the problem of high textbook prices. Open textbooks are produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license, making them freely available to use and modify. (They may be used free digitally or printed locally at cost.) In addition to savings, the ability to adapt textbook content to make it regionally relevant allows instruction to be consciously "place based", increasing student engagement by emphasizing community connections, highlighting local examples, and integrating local First Nations' traditional knowledge. This is of particular value in Atlantic Canada, a region often poorly represented in "Canadian edition" introductory geology textbooks. Building an open textbook from the ground up is labour intensive, but an up-to-date textbook already exists that could act as a foundation for an Atlantic edition: *Physical Geology*, released in 2015 by the BCcampus Open Textbook Project, and modified for use by the University of Saskatchewan in 2018. This presentation reports the preliminary results of a pilot project using the 2015 edition of *Physical Geology* to support a non-majors introductory geology course at Cape Breton University, as well as the results of a survey of current textbook use and instructor attitudes about open textbooks at Atlantic Canadian universities offering first year geology courses.