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## Research council funds Laurier researcher's digital NatureWatch partnership

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University researcher **Robert McLeman** has received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for his digital NatureWatch 2.0 community partnership project. Minister of State (Science and Technology) Gary Goodyear announced the Partnership Development Grant recipients at the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities in Victoria on May 31.

McLeman, an associate professor in Laurier's Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, will receive \$199,000 over two years to lead a project entitled "NatureWatch 2.0: reconnecting Canadians with nature in a digital age." The goal of the project is to create a new, Canada-wide generation of enthusiastic, educated and engaged citizen scientists, to provide them with the tools to have fun learning about the environment around them, and to engage them with researchers and one another in environmental reporting and monitoring.

"Growing out of Laurier's collaborative research culture, Professor McLeman's project will provide Canadians with the digital tools to participate in environmental data collection and has the potential to foster long-lasting environmental engagement," said Abby Goodrum, Laurier vice-president: research.

McLeman's partners in this project include the David Suzuki Foundation, Nature Canada, Desire2Learn, and the University of Ottawa. The partnership team will develop cutting-edge smartphone and online collaboration tools for citizen science and nature education.

McLeman launched [www.RinkWatch.org](http://www.RinkWatch.org), another citizen scientist initiative, in January. The website invited Canadians who maintain a backyard or neighbourhood hockey rink to report skating conditions over the winter, providing valuable data about the impact of climate change. The site garnered hundreds of participants from across North America.

The **SSHRC Partnership Development Grant** program is designed to provide support to partnerships to develop research and related activities in the social sciences and humanities, including knowledge mobilization and the meaningful involvement of students and new scholars. Partnership Development Grant projects may also test partnership approaches that serve as models for other researcher partnerships on the regional, national, or international level.

**Link to SSHRC release:** <http://bit.ly/11z4omL>