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JANUARY 30, 2018 | 010-18

Laurier students team up with northern high school students for environmental field course near Yellowknife

WATERLOO – Eight undergraduate students from Wilfrid Laurier University's Geography and Environmental Studies program will be teaming up with four senior high school students from **Yellowknife, Northwest Territories** for a week-long field course from **Feb. 10 to 17** at the **Hoarfrost River field site**, 260 km northeast of Yellowknife. The field course will study wintertime hydrological processes, including accumulation and redistribution of snow, and interactions of snow with vegetation and soils.

Led by **Bill Quinton**, director of Laurier's [Cold Regions Research Centre](#) and the [Scotty Creek Research Station](#), the students will use state-of-the-art equipment, including drones and thermal imaging technology, to conduct research on many aspects of winter eco-hydrology.

"The learning environment is greatly enriched by making field research programs visible and available for student participation," said Quinton. "For students, both at the high school and undergraduate level, to gain hands-on research experience in the field is an incredible opportunity."

The Hoarfrost River site is home to Kristen and Dave Olesen. Since 1987, the family has run a large kennel of working sled dogs, operated a commercial aviation service and hosted training courses on wilderness first aid and backcountry survival. The site is located on McLeod Bay of Great Slave Lake with the taiga-tundra transition zone to the north.

In July 2014, a wildfire devastated the area and destroyed the Olesen's family home along with other outbuildings. The Olesens are rebuilding their home while observing the land in its stages of regrowth and recovery. This site provides an exciting research base for Quinton's students to learn about changes to winter eco-hydrology after forest fires.

Indigenous elder Herman Catholique from Lutselk'e will also be sharing traditional knowledge about the land, environment and ecosystem during the course.

"The Hoarfrost River course provides a forum for sharing ideas and knowledge, and helps to develop new perspectives, respect and understanding for different ways of knowing," said Quinton. "Such collaborative learning is empowering to students as it gives them a voice in creating new knowledge."

This is the third Northern field course led by Quinton, who has also led field courses at the Scotty Creek field site in NWT. For more information on Laurier's northern research program, visit wlu.ca/northernresearch.

Quinton will be available for interviews in Yellowknife on Feb. 9, 18, 19 and 20.

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