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## New Laurier Research Chair program helping top researchers make an impact

WATERLOO – Three Wilfrid Laurier University faculty members have been named the inaugural [Laurier Research Chairs](#). Professors [Mark Eys](#), [William Quinton](#) and [Anne Wilson](#), all previous [Canada Research Chairs](#), begin their new internal research awards on July 1.

The Laurier Research Chair program allows faculty members to gradually return to teaching duties while continuing significant research activity after completing their federally funded Canada Research Chair terms.

“Professors Eys, Quinton and Wilson each took full advantage of their two five-year terms as Canada Research Chairs to significantly advance knowledge in their respective fields of sport psychology, cold regions hydrology and social psychology,” said **Jeffery Jones**, Laurier’s interim associate vice-president: research. “The new Laurier Research Chair program will allow them to continue to devote a significant amount of time to research as they provide more undergraduate and graduate students the benefit of their knowledge and experience.”

**Eys**, a member of the [Kinesiology and Physical Education](#) and [Psychology](#) departments, will conclude his second term as **Canada Research Chair in Group Dynamics and Physical Activity** on June 30. His research focuses on understanding how group and social dynamics influence involvement in physical activity.

“This award is personally meaningful because it recognizes the hard work we have put in to better understand the social environment and because it allows for devoted research time to continue to develop research partnerships and projects in this area of study,” said Eys.

Eys researches physical activity within groups at all levels from youth sports to elite athletes, as well as group issues in work and organizational environments. His current research project aims to facilitate physical activity for women and children new to Canada.

“Groups are pervasive and influential in every life context,” said Eys. “A better understanding of how to select group members, create group structure and successfully bring people together to work as a team is critical for group performance outcomes and retention of individual members.”

**Quinton**, from the [Department of Geography and Environmental Studies](#), held a **Canada Research Chair in Cold Regions Hydrology** from 2005 to 2015. His research at the time centred on understanding how climate change affects hydrological processes in cold regions and now focuses on permafrost thaw, particularly in the Dehcho Region of the southwestern Northwest Territories.

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"I'm honoured to be chosen as a Laurier Research Chair," said Quinton. "It's an indication that Laurier takes its Canada Research Chairs seriously and wants to continue investing in the research they're doing."

Quinton is now focusing on a new project, the [Dehcho Collaborative on Permafrost](#), which was co-proposed by Dehcho community members and researchers at the [Scotty Creek Research Station](#), which Quinton leads.

"The project is focused on reducing the uncertainties of permafrost thaw in one of the most rapidly warming areas of the Earth, as well as on improving community engagement," said Quinton. "We need all hands on deck because with the region warming so quickly, the questions and challenges we're facing are truly unprecedented."

**Wilson**, a member of the [Department of Psychology](#), held a **Canada Research Chair in Social Psychology** from 2007 to 2017. Her research focuses on identity, motivation and goal pursuit over time. She has applied her work to topics ranging from personal motivation to societal memories and goals such as historical injustice, future environmental sustainability and climate change.

"The Laurier Research Chair program will allow me to keep contributing meaningfully to research that can help address important societal issues," said Wilson. "It will also give me the ability to train and mentor students so that they can become independent researchers, critical thinkers, communicators and problem solvers in a wide variety of career paths."

One of Wilson's current projects examines strategies people can use to stick to their exercise goals rather than being derailed by short-term temptations and barriers. Another new project, which builds on her earlier work on the psychology of climate change, aims to understand rising political polarization.

"I study how media and social media contribute to misconceptions about polarization, increase intergroup dislike, and lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of increased division," said Wilson. "Ultimately, my goal is to find strategies to counteract some of these processes."

This year, all previous Canada Research Chairs and those completing their second terms in 2019 were eligible to apply for the competitive Laurier Research Chair program. In the future, faculty members will apply a year before the end of their Canada Research Chair terms. Laurier Research Chairs hold their titles in perpetuity.

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