



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**OPEN Water Planning Project welcomes  
Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education**

OTTAWA, ONTARIO July 30, 2014 – The OPEN Water planning project today announced that the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE) has come on board as a partner. Minnesota joins Canadian Geographic Education (CG Ed) and the North Dakota Geographic Alliance (NDGA) in planning an innovative, international project to engage students in freshwater field study in the Nelson River watershed. OPEN Water plans to enable elementary and high school students to undertake place-based investigations in the Nelson/Lake Winnipeg watershed, a vast basin that touches four American states and four Canadian provinces.

“We are absolutely delighted that the Minnesota Alliance has joined the project. With part of the state within the watershed and a tradition of offering unique professional development opportunities for teachers, the Minnesota Alliance will be instrumental in helping shape the project in a way that motivates and inspires teachers,” said Connie Wyatt Anderson, Chair of CG Education and Project Leader.

Dr. David A. Lanegran, MAGE Coordinator, said the members of MAGE are proud to be asked to join the innovative collaboration. “The geography, history and economy of Minnesota have all been dramatically impacted by the water quality and land use of the Nelson River/Lake Winnipeg Watershed, “ he said. “This project provides us a welcome opportunity to strengthen our connections to North Dakota and neighboring Provinces, and we look forward to an exciting implementation of citizen science.”

The project is distinguished by its international dimension and by its aim to accommodate scientific approaches and land-based traditional knowledge. While emphasizing geographic thinking, the project has other touch points with the K-12 curriculum such as science, environmental studies, indigenous studies, politics and world issues.

“Getting students out in the field for place-based investigations is a key aspect of OPEN Water,” said Marilyn Weiser, NDGA Coordinator. “All the partners in this planning grant are motivated by the desire to engender in today’s students a lifelong appreciation for our environment.”

Students’ field observations will be recorded and shared in FieldScope, National Geographic’s interactive mapping platform that extends the tools of exploration and investigation to the classroom. This digital tool will help students document and understand the world around them and identify larger trends and answer important research questions. OPEN Water would encourage classes to examine their own data but



also compare their observations and findings with other classes in the watershed, underlining the interconnectedness of all the waterways in the basin.

The project, in its planning stage, is funded by a grant from the National Geographic Society Foundation. One of the original partners, the Geographic Alliance of Washington State decided to step back. “We want to acknowledge the contribution Geographic Alliance of Washington State,” said Wyatt Anderson. “We are grateful for their insight and guidance in the early stages of the planning project.”

The Nelson watershed and Lake Winnipeg in particular are the focus of a great deal of environmental activity by governments, universities and non-governmental agencies. As it plans for a pilot phase, OPEN Water wants to take advantage of the work that has already begun.

At this stage, the partners are looking to a broad range of organizations that could lend their expertise, enthusiasm and support to OPEN Water. Individuals and organizations interested in learning more or making a contribution can contact Connie Wyatt Anderson, Chair of the CG Education and OPEN Water Project Leader at [wyattanderson@cgeducation.ca](mailto:wyattanderson@cgeducation.ca).

- 30 -

For more information

Deb Chapman  
Communications Manager  
The Royal Canadian Geographical Society  
613.745.4629

[chapman@rcgs.org](mailto:chapman@rcgs.org)



## BACKGROUND

Founded in 1888, the **National Geographic Society (NGS)** is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. With a mission to inspire people to care about the planet, the member-supported Society offers a [community](#) for members to get closer to explorers, connect with other members and help make a difference. The Society reaches more than 450 million people worldwide each month through *National Geographic* and other magazines, National Geographic Channel, television documentaries, music, radio, films, books, DVDs, maps, exhibitions, live events, school publishing programs, interactive media and merchandise. National Geographic has funded more than 10,000 scientific research, conservation and exploration projects and supports an education program promoting geographic literacy. For more information, visit [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com).

**Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE)** Since 1987, the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE) has been engaged in a wide ranging set of professional development activities, public policy advocacy, curriculum development, and programming for extracurricular learning. The core of the Alliance leadership began as a team of college faculty and master teachers that had successfully completed summer institutes funded by the National Science Foundation. Based at Macalester College throughout its history, MAGE has as its mission to enhance the level of geographic literacy of the state through professional development for in-service teachers, the creation of a common assessment for high school geography classes that is aligned with the state graduation requirements, the development of curriculum for all levels of geography instruction, and the promotion of the awareness of the importance of geographic education among the general public. For more information, visit [lt.umn.edu/mage/](http://lt.umn.edu/mage/)

**North Dakota Geographic Alliance (NDGA)** is dedicated to promoting and increasing the level of geographic literacy, to fostering innovation in geographic education and to encouraging stewardship and conservation of Earth's resources. NDGA equips North Dakota students and teachers with the geographic knowledge and skills to become empowered global thinkers and problem solvers in an interconnected world. For more information, visit [www.ndgeographic.org](http://www.ndgeographic.org)

**Canadian Geographic Education (CG Education)** is the educational network of The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, one of Canada's largest educational associations. The programs of CG Education aim to strengthen geographic education in the classroom and to increase the emphasis on geography within the school system. Through innovative programming with a wide range of public and private sector partners, CG Education endeavours to foster geographic engagement and increase the public awareness of and support for geographical literacy. For more information, visit [www.cgeducation.ca](http://www.cgeducation.ca)