

Brief History of the CGS Cross Canada Lecture Tour

By Doug VanDine, March 2017

The Cross Canada Lecture Tour was initiated by the Associate Committee on Geotechnical Research (a forerunner to the Canadian Geotechnical Society) in 1965. The purpose of the lecture tour was initially, and continues to be, to provide CGS members and other Canadian geotechnical professionals an opportunity to attend high quality technical presentations by prominent Canadian and international geotechnical professionals.

In September 1965, the ACGR organized and hosted the 6th International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering in Montreal. The first CCLT, held shortly after that conference, may have been somehow associated with the conference.

The first lecturer, in the Fall of 1965, was Ivan Rosenqvist from the University of Oslo, Norway. The topic(s) of his presentation(s) are unknown, but Dr. Rosenqvist was at that time a professor of mineralogy and geology, whose specialty was marine sediments, specifically clays and clay minerals. So his topics may have been associated with this specialty, likely related to the Norwegian quick clay. (However, that having been said, Dr. Rosenqvist attended the 6th ISCSMFE and presented a paper on the 'Fundamental Properties of Some Norwegian Magmatic and Metamorphic Rocks'!)

The second lecturer, in the Spring of 1966, was David Henkel from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, and the third lecturer, in the Fall of 1966, was a young, Canadian-born Lecturer from Imperial College in the UK, Norbert Morgenstern. (Two years later, Dr. Morgenstern returned to Canada and joined the faculty of the University of Alberta.)

Since 1965, the CCLT has been presented each year and, for most years, twice a year. The intent is to have one Canadian lecturer and one international lecturer each year, and for the most part that intent has been met. On five occasions two lecturers have split a single tour, with one lecturer covering eastern Canada and one lecturer covering western Canada. Five individuals have been 'Cross Canada Lecturers' more than once: Geoffrey Meyerhof (1967 and 1983); Robert Quigley (1969 and 1990); Victor Milligan (1972 and 1997); Ralph Peck (1972 and 2000); and Liam Finn (1991 and 2001). A list of all past lecturers can be found on the CGS website http://cgs.ca/cross_canada.php (last accessed March 2017). It reads like a who's who of Canadian and international geotechnique.

In 1972, the CGS assumed the responsibility for selecting the lecturers, arranging the lectures through the 20 CGS sections across the country, and covering the lecturers' travel costs and honoraria.

In the late 1990s, due to funding issues, there was talk of reducing the frequency of the CCLTs. The Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique (or Geo Contributions as it was called until 2000) came to the rescue. By 2000, largely through the hard work of Dr. Michael Bozozuk, the Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique President, and Geo Contributions members Jack Clark and Ray Benson, and the generosity of CGS members Jack Mollard and Ben Torchinsky, sufficient funds were raised to retain the two CCLTs per year. Since 2000, a major activity of the Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique has been to solicit donations from Canadian corporations to sponsor the travel costs involved in the two CCLTs each year.

Vaughn Griffiths from the Colorado School of Mines, CO, will be the 99th lecturer in the Spring of 2017, and Jean-Marie Konrad from Université Laval, QC, will be the 100th lecturer in the Fall of 2017. With these two lecturers, there will have been 53 Canadian lecturers and 47 international lecturers (although some of the international lecturers have also been Canadians). There will have been 58 academics, 31 consultants or individuals from industry, and 11 industry from various levels of government.

The Cross Canada Lecture Tour has been, and continues to be, one of the 'flagship' activities of the CGS. These twice-a-year lecture tours are very positively anticipated by many CGS local sections, CGS members and Canadian geotechnical professionals. The CCLT has the distinction of being the longest such lecture tour anywhere in the world, and is the envy of geotechnical organizations and geotechnical professionals in many countries.