

Thomas Hobbs Fletcher, 1960-2020

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of alumni Thomas Hobbs Fletcher (PhD, 1998). After prolonged illness, Tom passed away in his home in Montreal on May 24, 2020. He will be greatly missed by the Quebec geography community. He leaves behind his devoted husband Stéphane St-Jean, his loving family in Louisiana, the devoted St-Jean family in Quebec, and many dear friends here in Quebec and elsewhere.

Tom was born and raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After completing a bachelor’s degree at Louisiana State University, he moved to Washington, DC to study urban planning at the University of Maryland. Throughout the 1980s, he lived in Washington, DC working at the US Environmental Protection Agency. It was here that Tom’s curiosity about the impacts of environmental policy and concerns about environmental justice began. In 1993, on a Fulbright Scholarship, he moved to Montreal to do a PhD in geography at McGill University. He graduated in 1998 and, in 1999, joined the faculty in the Department of Geography at Bishop’s University where he became a full professor and taught environment-themed courses and courses in human geography and urban planning for over twenty years.

Tom had a sustained research interest in environmental policy, hazardous waste management and social justice. He was also fascinated by the impact of the Canada-US border in shaping national environmental policy differences. His thesis, *Environmental Justice and Hazardous Waste: A View from the Canada-United States Border* was supported by Canada-US Fulbright Foundation, Hydro-Québec, and the Max Bell Foundation. Research from this thesis and a postdoctoral grant from New York State Archives Partnership Trust later informed *From Love Canal to Environmental Justice: The Politics of Hazardous Waste on the Canada-U.S. Border* (Broadview Press, 2003) which traced the impacts of Love Canal on environmental politics from the late 1970s onwards. Captured by the Love Canal case, many of his published works in the early 2000s focused on this topic and the Niagara Region including an entry in *The Encyclopedia of New York State* (2005) and articles in *Land Use Policy* (2002) and *History Now* (2003).

In the early 2000s, Tom’s teaching at Bishops and the Eastern Townships context also inspired his writing, research, and teaching. Wanting to provide stronger Canadian content for his courses on environmental policy inspired him to write a Canadian edition of Charles Harper’s *Environment and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues* with Pearson Canada in 2010. He also began researching the history of local watershed conservation movements, specifically those surrounding the Memphremagog and Massawippi lake systems, which he traced through the archival records available at the Eastern Townships Resource Centre (ETRC). Throughout the early 2000s, he was the Editor of *The Journal of Eastern Townships Studies* and served as an Executive Board Member of the Quebec Group of the Sierra Club of Canada.

In recent years, Tom’s focus was on questions of environmental injustice in the Canadian context. He argued for greater use of the concept of injustice to interpret environmental conflicts and for greater attention to Canadian cases which are not typically defined as such. At the time of his passing, he had been exploring these ideas in *The Environmental Justice Movement: Interpreting Environmental Problems as Injustices* which he was writing for the University of Toronto Press.

In lieu of flowers a donation to the Montreal Neurological Institute would be greatly appreciated. A ceremony will be held at a later date.

<https://www.alumni.mcgill.ca/give/index.php?formlang=F&formtype=MNI&new=1>