

Dedication

Péter Pascal Dávid (1932-2003)

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Dedication

PÉTER PASCAL DÁVID (1932-2003)



This Drylands issue of *Géographie physique et Quaternaire* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Péter Pascal Dávid, former professor of geology at Université de Montréal and pioneer in the study of eolian sediments and eolian geomorphology in Canada, who passed away on September 25, 2003.

Peter David was born on June 9, 1932 in Szeged, Hungary. Initially educated in Hungary, Peter obtained an undergraduate degree in geology, prior to the failed anti-communist revolution of 1956. He subsequently emigrated to Canada, by way of Yugoslavia, and arrived in Québec City on June 6, 1957. Peter pursued a B.Sc. at McGill University, and completed his degree in 1959. In 1960, he undertook his first field research on eolian sediments on behalf of the Saskatchewan Research Council in the region of Regina. In 1961, he completed his M.Sc. at McGill comparing grain characteristics between eolian sediments in Hungary and the Canadian prairies (David, 1961). Subsequently, Dr. Earl Christianson entrusted him with mapping the surficial geology and groundwater resources of the Prelate region (NTS 72K) that includes the vast area known as the Great Sand Hills. Peter initiated his field work in 1961, and made it the subject of his Ph.D. which he completed at McGill under the supervision of Dr. John Elson (David, 1964). It is a credit to Peter's determination, that he completed three university degrees within seven years after arriving in Canada, and had learned both English and French during this time.

In 1965, Peter began an academic career in the Department of Geology at Université de Montréal, first as Assistant Professor (1965-1969), then as Associate Professor (1969-1982), and finally as Full Professor (1982 until his retirement in 1997). During his career, Peter taught geomorphology, airphoto-interpretation, hydrogeology, and glacial geology at all levels, and supervised five masters and two doctorate theses.

For more than forty years, Peter continued his work in the prairies and on eolian geomorphology in Canada. He published several significant findings from his doctorate research, including detailed descriptions of the Late Wisconsinan Prelate Ferry paleosol (David, 1966a, 1987a) and the discovery of Mazama Ash in Saskatchewan (David, 1970). In 1977, he published an important work that still constitutes the essential reference on eolian deposits in Canada (David, 1977a). Peter's research subsequently extended to dunes in upper St. Lawrence River regions of Québec (David, 1988), and to the Cree Lake and Athabasca regions of northern Saskatchewan (David, 1981a, b). From these latter studies, Peter interpreted the direction of katabatic air flow off the ice sheets at the end of the Late Wisconsinan glaciation (David, 1981a).

In 1972, Peter initiated research into the glacial geology of the Gaspésie, which he continued for more than twenty years in parallel with his studies of eolian geomorphology. His most important contributions regarding the geology of Gaspésie included the stratigraphy and glacial history (Lebuis and David, 1977), erosion and glacial dispersion (Chauvin and David, 1987), geochemistry and preglacial alterations (Bédard and David, 1991a, b), and a model of till genesis (Charbonneau and David, 1993).

In 1993, the Geological Survey of Canada initiated the Palliser Triangle Global Change project. With a renewed interest in geomorphic processes and environmental change in the southern Canadian prairies, Peter's understanding of eolian systems in this region were invaluable. During the next decade, Peter published extensively with newly established colleagues (David, 1993a, 1998; David *et al.*, 1999; Wolfe and David, 1997; Wolfe *et al.*, 2000, 2001). From these contributions, it is recognized that eolian landscapes in prairie drylands are the most sensitive geomorphic systems to climate variability, and that much of the region lies near a threshold of extensive eolian activity.

In addition to this research Peter left us with many less recognized, though relevant, contributions. He was frequently requested by park authorities, students and other researchers to interpret dune morphology. To this end, "the Peter David circle trail" in the Holmes Crossing Sand Hills of Alberta bears his name. Peter coined the term "dunologist", to describe those whose interest is the study of sand dunes and eolian geomorphology. Lastly, he postulated "the wet-sand hypothesis", as an alternative to vegetation, to explain the formation of parabolic dune morphology (David, 1978b).

These contributions establish Peter David as a veritable pioneer in geomorphology in Canada. In addition, for all who knew him, Peter represented a model of enthusiasm and perseverance. He has left a memory of a careful and attentive colleague, endowed at the same time with a great sense of humour and "joie de vivre".

Michel A. Bouchard and Stephen A. Wolfe

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