



Background 2009

The Great Canadian Geography Challenge is a national student competition designed to help foster an interest in geography among young Canadians, and to raise the profile of geography with teachers and the public.

More than 108,000 students in 582 schools across Canada participated in this year's Geography Challenge. The Challenge is divided into two levels: Level 1 is for Grades 4 to 6 and is designed to be an introductory opportunity for teaching geography. Challenges are held as a classroom activity. Winners of Level 1 Challenges receive award certificates and are eligible for a national prize draw.

The Level 2 Challenge is open to students under the age of 16 as of August 31, 2009. It begins with a school level Challenge where an overall winner is declared. School level winners then write a qualifying test for the right to advance to the provincial and territorial championships. Within each province or territory, students with the top scores from the qualifying tests are invited to participate in their respective provincial or territorial championships. Provincial championship events are held in April while the championships for Prince Edward Island and Nunavut, Northwest and Yukon territories is held online.

On May 21, 2009, thirty-six provincial and territorial winners will compete online from school locations throughout each province and territory in the hope of winning HSBC Bank Canada scholarships (first place/\$3,000, second/\$2,000 and third/\$1,000), certificates and merchandise prizes. The online format is unique among student competitions of this type.

In its 15th year, the Challenge is presented by HSBC Bank Canada and organized nationally by the Canadian Council for Geographic Education (CCGE) with the help of The Royal Canadian Geographical Society and local teachers and volunteers. The program is also supported by Official Sponsors: The Canadian Atlas Online and *Canadian Geographic* magazine.

The top finishers in this year's and last year's Challenge will vie for berths on the Canadian team competing at the *2009 National Geographic World Championship*. Each person on the three-student Canadian team will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the competition. The trip also includes a stopover in Ottawa where they will meet in person for the first time and tune up for the World Championship.

Held every two years, the National Geographic World Championship is staged by the National Geographic Society of Washington, DC. The Canadians compete against teams from countries that include Australia, France, Russia and the United States. Canada has done well in past World Championships: Bronze (2007), Bronze (2005), Silver (2001), Silver (1999), Gold (1997), Bronze (1995).

The CCGE is the education committee of The Royal Canadian Geographical Society and is made up of over 3,000 teachers across Canada who volunteer their time to support geographic education. Chaired by Beth Dye, the CCGE promotes geographic education to highlight the importance of geographic literacy and the role geography can play in the curriculum. The CCGE is also supported by the National Geographic Society.

The Royal Canadian Geographical Society is Canada's most trusted source for geographic information and insight. With more than 210,000 members, the non-profit Society is dedicated to broadening public knowledge of geography through research and education. It publishes the award winning *Canadian Geographic* and *géographica* magazines. Other programs include a popular lecture series featuring today's leading scientists and explorers, grants for research and expeditions, scholarships and the *Great Canadian Geography Challenge*.