

## **The Mountain Legacy Project: Making meaning with repeat survey processes in the Canadian mountain west**

*Mary Sanseverino, Eric Higgs, Rob Watt, Rick Arthur.* University of Victoria BC, Canada  
msanseve@uvic.ca

Since 1996, Mountain Legacy Project (MLP) researchers have had the privilege of working with the largest systematic collection of mountain photography in the world. These glass negatives, created as intermediate artifacts in the mountain mapping processes of the late 19th / early 20th century, provide an unparalleled historic view of Canada's mountain west. MLP is particularly interested in these images because of their systematic and comprehensive qualities. Surveyors, like A.O. Wheeler and M.P. Bridgland, selected, climbed, surveyed, and photographed peaks within a given region so as to allow each survey station to be viewable by at least two other stations. Now, over 100 years later, by repeating the images from the same locations, MLP is able to compare present landscapes with the past and, through careful interpretation and analysis, explore the dynamics and interplay of ecological, climate, and human-induced change.

This presentation examines the processes inherent in the Mountain Legacy Project: a “peek under the hood” to show MLP at work. Today, much as 110 years ago when A.O. Wheeler was surveying and making images in the mountains above Banff, the design, implementation, and evaluation of process – be it around data handling, field work, archival research, information dissemination, etc. – is the keystone to project success. With over 140,000 plates in collections, largely at Library and Archives Canada and the BC Archives, and approximately 5000 of these images scanned at hi-resolution, re-photographed, and held online at the University of Victoria, MLP has truly entered the era of processing “Big Data”.

MLP continues to work with the legacy left by the mountain surveyors of the past, with the goal of adding to the legacy for the future. The historic surveyors and their process has gifted us with an exceptional view of the past. Hopefully, with care and planning, MLP processes will stand the same test of time.