

Pan Pacific '96 Hazards Conference and Trade Show

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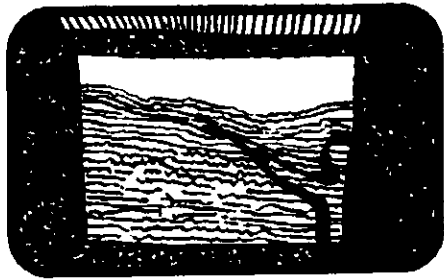
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Pan Pacific '96 Hazards Conference and Trade Show

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The Disaster Preparedness Resource Centre, University of British Columbia (UBC), organized and sponsored a five-day interdisciplinary conference and trade show on natural hazards from 29 July to 2 August 1996 in Vancouver, British Columbia. According to the organizers, the meeting was "designed to build bridges between countries through the exchange of technology, experience, and practical knowledge of disaster management." Some 1200 delegates representing numerous countries around the world participated in Pan Pacific Hazards '96.

The strong political awareness and international stature of the conference was apparent at the opening ceremonies, with the presence of the Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General of British Columbia, and Canada's Secretary of State and Ambassador for the Environment, as well as the President of UBC, and the Director of the IDNDR (International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction), UNESCO Secretariat.

Vancouver was an excellent venue for such a meeting, since the province fronts the seismically active Cascadia subduction zone, is frequently under the threat of flooding and landsliding, and shares many of the natural hazards experienced by other countries within the Pacific Rim. Pan Pacific Hazards '96 was immensely successful and follows two other equally successful, but much smaller hazards meetings in BC held in 1991 and 1993.

Technical talks were presented in 54

technical sessions over a four-day period, which in some cases involved up to nine concurrent sessions at any one time. Poster sessions complimented many of the oral sessions each day. The third day of the meeting provided an opportunity for the public to attend the Trade and Exhibit Show at no cost, during which time registered delegates participated in either technical tours or workshops.

Technical tours varied considerably, ranging from the geology and hazards of the Squamish and Whistler areas, and examination of unreinforced masonry buildings in downtown Vancouver, to trips to the Pacific Geoscience Centre and Butchart Gardens in Victoria. Workshops were held on topics such as Business Impact Analysis, Structural Rehabilitation of Schools and Hospitals, Earthquake Loss Estimation Models, and the Role of Transportation in Disaster Response and Recovery.

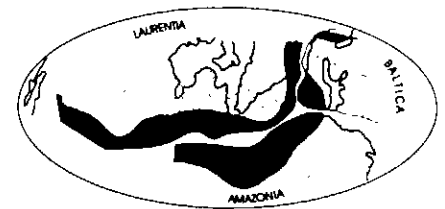
Other informative and unique additions to this conference were 12 panel sessions moderated in each case by well-known specialists in the field in question and further supported by several equally international and knowledgeable discussion panelists. Panel discussions covered several interesting subjects from geology to economics: for example, Humanitarian and Military Assistance in Disaster Relief, Catastrophe Financial Planning and Recovery, Risk Communication, and Volcanic Ash and Aviation Safety.

The main attraction of the meeting was the diversity of topics addressed during the oral and poster technical sessions. This included themes such as the Evaluation of Structural and Non-structural Hazards, Managing Volcanic Risks, Hazard Maps for Earthquake Mitigation, The Epidemiological Profiles of Disasters, Great Earthquakes Around the Pacific Rim, Slope Failures, Tsunami and Floods, Insurance Issues, The Role of Media in Disasters, and School Preparedness.

The meeting attracted diverse participants, including volcanologists, geologists, psychologists, sociologists, engineers, planners, CEOs, insurance brokers, and medical practitioners. Talks were generally informative and well presented in spite of the common problems associated with using volunteer projectionists who were not adequately briefed or trained in carousel mechanics. The organizers are also credited with attracting dozens of sponsors including BC Hydro, IBM, Transport Canada, and the BC Ministry of Employment and Invest-

ment. Endorsements from groups such as Provincial Emergency Preparedness, the Canadian National Committee for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and the IUGS Commission on Geological Sciences for Environmental Planning (COGEOENVIRONMENT) furthered the credibility of this meeting.

The conference was a great success, important facts were presented, state-of-the-art technology was displayed, recent natural disasters were described, and critical hazard-related networking was greatly facilitated. The abstracts for the meeting appear in a 312 page volume and on CD-ROM, both still available from the conference organizers at The University of British Columbia.



Proterozoic Evolution in the North Atlantic Realm

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This conference was organized by COPENA (Correlation of Precambrian of Europe and North America - IGCP 371) in conjunction with ECSOOT (Eastern Canadian Onshore-Offshore Transect - Lithoprobe) and IBTA (International Basement Tectonics Association) and was held in Goose Bay, Labrador from 29 July to 2 August 1996. Eighty earth scientists from 14 countries attended the meeting, travelling from as far as China, Russia, Ukraine, Brazil and Australia. In addition, the Nordic countries of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark were all represented; other European countries