



University of  
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release — Tuesday, October 27, 2020

## **PUBLIC Professor Series talk to answer questions you never thought to ask about Richardson's ground squirrels**

Named in 1822 to honour arctic explorer and British Naval Officer Sir John Richardson, Richardson's ground squirrels are expensive exotic pets for some, detested agricultural pests for others, and fascinating research subjects for a few.

Known as gophers in common parlance, Richardson's ground squirrels are depicted in a variety of ways, often anthropomorphically. Gainer the Gopher is the Saskatchewan Roughriders' partially clothed mascot, and Torrington's Gopher Hole Museum is entirely devoted to dioramas that use stuffed gophers as well-dressed avatars of townfolk. Yet, many wish to destroy Richardson's ground squirrels, even holding competitions with prizes for those who submit the most tails.



On Thursday, October 29, University of Lethbridge biological sciences professor emeritus, Dr. Gail Michener, will present *Love Them, Despise Them, Study Them: Perspectives on an iconic prairie animal*. This is the second regular talk of the 2020/21 season for the Faculty of Arts & Science's PUBLIC Professor Series. The free event is open to the public and starts at 7 p.m.

COVID-19 has impacted the way we do everything, including the delivery of our events. The safety of our speakers and guests in attendance is of the utmost importance to us, and for that reason, this talk will be delivered LIVE ONLINE. Attendees are asked register for this event at <https://pps-michener.eventbrite.ca>. Registration is required. All registrants will receive secure access information prior to the talk.

Michener obtained her BSc at the University of Adelaide, Australia, and her PhD at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan. She has taught at universities in Africa and the USA, but most of her professional career has been at the University of Lethbridge, during which time she received research awards from the American Society of Mammalogists and the U of L, as well as teaching awards from the Animal Behaviour Society and the U of L. She has served as president of the Animal Behaviour Society and of the Canadian Council on Animal Care.

Now retired from her position as Professor of Biological Sciences and Board of Governors Research Chair, Michener continues to analyze data from a multi-decade longitudinal study of the behavioural ecology of Richardson's ground squirrels, colloquially — and incorrectly — known as gophers. She has published more than 50 scholarly articles on life history, demographics, reproductive success, kinship, social and spatial relationships, growth and survival, and burrow architecture.

For more on the PUBLIC Professor Series, visit: [uleth.ca/artsci/public-professor-series](http://uleth.ca/artsci/public-professor-series)

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