

## ES08: Professional Geoscience 3: Toward Responsible Geoscience

**Conveners:** Leonora King<sup>1,2</sup>, Lucy MacKenzie<sup>1,3</sup>, David Reid<sup>1,4</sup> and Marc Tadaki<sup>1,5</sup>

**Co-chairs:** Lucy MacKenzie<sup>1,3</sup>, and Marc Tadaki<sup>1,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z2  
Fax: 604 822 6150

<sup>2</sup>Phone: 778 378 6009, E-mail: lkinggeo@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Phone: 778 689 2416, E-mail: lucy.mackenzie@geog.ubc.ca

<sup>4</sup>Phone: 604 763 2353 , E-mail: 00.dave.reid@gmail.com

<sup>5</sup>Phone: 604 442 5004, E-mail: m.tadaki@gmail.com

### Session Description

As human processes increasingly drive change in the form and function of biogeophysical systems, the roles of geoscientists are also changing. The task of the geoscientist these days involves more than just producing rigorous and valid knowledge of the biophysical world; it involves ‘being responsible’ to and for invested human communities, both public and private. In addition, the institutional positions of geoscientists are diverse; while many geoscientists may still be found in government institutes and university departments, increasing numbers are also present in consultancies, non-governmental organizations and private corporations. Given this diversity of roles, is there any coherent way in which geoscientists might think about ‘responsibility’? This session considers what might define a responsible geoscience, and therefore how geoscientists might be responsible to their field, the biophysical systems they study, and the communities that depend on those systems. The conduct and application of geoscience has, through its very nature, material impacts on the world through the exploitation and management of natural resources. Given Canada’s abundant resources and strong resource sector, there are many examples of geoscience companies embroiled in challenging social and ethical situations both domestically (e.g. the construction of hydroelectric dams in traditional First Nations territory) and internationally (e.g. the alleged use of forced labour in overseas mining projects). These conflicts raise important and timely questions about the ethics of the practice of geoscience in Canada. Beyond applied geoscience, who produces scientific knowledge of the earth, which systems we study and how we study them are all questions imbued with values that go beyond scientific considerations. In this session, we aim to explore the diverse contexts and meanings of ‘responsibility’ in geoscience: what kinds of outcomes are we as scientists responsible *for*, and to what communities are we responsible *to*?

**Primary Affiliation:** CGU Earth Surface Processes