




It's the  
Queer  
Issue!



# The Argosy

 Queer television p. 14  
 Queer genes p. 21  
 Queer sports p. 27

October 27, 2005

Celebrating queer culture since 2005

Vol. 135 Iss. 7

## A magically dendrochronological adventure

### Mount Allison student discovers oldest known Red Spruce in the world

Bethany Coulthard  
Humour Editor

Mount Allison student Ben Phillips has discovered one of the most exciting trees on the East Coast. In August he found the oldest Red Spruce on record, at 445 years old.

Phillips spent his summer working with the Mount Allison Dendrochronology (MAD) Lab, the most advanced lab of its kind in the Maritimes.

According to Colin Laroque, Mount Allison professor of Geography and head of the MAD lab, the tree was found this August, somewhere between Saint John and Sackville, NB, along the Fundy coast. Don't try to get him to be more specific about the location, though; he credits the tree's survival to a lack of human influence, and hopes to keep the site a secret in order to protect it in the future.

Phillips determined the tree's age by drilling a tiny hole, about the width of a pinky fingernail, into the center of the trunk with an instrument called an increment borer. A core sample, which would show all of the tree's annual growth rings, was then extracted from the tree and analyzed in the lab. And voilà! a new Mt. A pseudo-celebrity was born.

Although one might assume that such an old tree would be fairly large, the tree Phillips has discovered is quite small at only twenty-seven centimeters in diameter. It is so small, in fact, that some sections of the trunk contain

approximately one hundred of the tiny growth rings within the diameter of a dime.

Red Spruce, which grow primarily in the Maritime Provinces, parts of Québec and New England, are generally found while young due to hundreds of years of deforestation in these areas. Their average lifespan is approximately 400 years. This explains why very little dendrochronological research has been conducted in Atlantic Canada, creating a literature gap which students like Phillips and professors like Laroque have been trying to fill.

All in all, the discovery has made a significant impact on the MAD Lab. The story has been running in newspapers, on the radio, and on TV for the past week, from small local papers in Saskatchewan, to international programs like CBC Radio's "As It Happens". The MAD Lab phone is still ringing off the hook.

"People now know we're here. We've been hearing from people from all over the place," said Laroque.

In terms of the impact the discovery will have on the dendrochronological field, Laroque hopes that it will attract some more attention to the MAD Lab and generate interest in dendrochronology as a field. Most importantly, however, he hopes that it will make people aware of the delicate ecosystems and old-growth forests that exist in the Maritimes.

"We have fuck-all for old growth forests left, but now people might be more aware!"



*Courtesy Mt. A MAD Lab*

**A comparison between a dime and the width of tree rings found by Mount Allison's student Ben Phillips. Phillips discovered the world's oldest known Red Spruce tree in August.**