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**B.C., Alberta glaciers melting quickly, UNBC research project discovers**

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Written by BERNICE TRICK  
 Citizen staff  
 Tuesday, 30 September 2008

Researchers at UNBC say they have found disturbing early results as they lead a project on the status of glaciers in B.C. and Alberta. Geography professor Dr. Brian Menounos says since 1985 B.C.'s 17,000 glaciers are "permanently losing 22 billion cubic metres of water each year."

That's the amount that would be required to fill up B.C. Place Stadium 8,300 times, he said. The project that includes researchers from Alberta and Washington state is designed to identify and document the current state of the glaciers as well as their fate over the next 150 years.

The team is focusing on several glaciers and icefields in B.C., which include the Lloyd George icefield west of Fort Nelson, glaciers in the Coast Mountains and Columbia River Basin, as well as the Castle Creek Glacier near McBride, which has been found to be unique outside Iceland. As it has been melting, the glacier has left a series of rows of rock and earth, called moraines, that precisely indicate how much the glacier has retreated each year. Similar to tree rings, they extend into the valley 750 metres from its edge, providing a unique geological record of the glacier's retreat during the past 50 years, said UNBC doctoral student Matt Beedle.

"We've never seen moraines like this outside of Iceland," said Beedle. "These moraines allow us to see even subtle annual variations in glacial retreat. What a global treasure."

Beedle recently did some measurements of the glacier that confirmed the thickness at one point had dropped more than 1.5 metres through the month of August.

Researchers take meteorological measurements of air temperature, wind speed, precipitation and humidity at each site to better understand the controls of glacier nourishment and melt. They are also measuring changes in thickness, volume, extent and movement of hundreds of

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This map shows the locations of the ongoing glacier research. (Submitted graphic)

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glaciers throughout mountain ranges in western Canada. It requires analysis of thousands of aerial photos, some of which date back 70 years. The largest glacier entirely in B.C. is the Klinaklini Glacier measuring 470 square kilometers located at the head of Knight Inlet in southwestern B.C. The 40 to 45-member team from seven universities will meet Thursday to Saturday at UNBC where various research findings will be presented. They are halfway through the five-year project, and by 2010 will be able to predict the rate and magnitude of glacial retreat under various climate scenarios. "The results will bear directly on how we manage water resources, access fresh water and even produce electricity in the near future," said Menounos, who noted the importance of glaciers cannot be understated as one of western Canada's freshwater resources. The project is funded by \$2.2 million for the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences and cash contributions from universities and network partners like BC Hydro and Columbia River Trust.

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