

Geography PhD student wins prestigious prizes

Sinith Sittrak, a PhD candidate in Human Geography, is the proud recipient of several prestigious prizes associated with her research.

Ms Sinith, a Thai scholar, was awarded the 2008 Gender, Place and Culture Award for New and Emerging scholars. This award, presented annually by the leading international journal of feminist geography, enabled her to attend the 10th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in Madrid, Spain in July. There she presented a paper based on her work with the archives of deceased Thai land rights activist Pornpet Meuansri.

She also received a **2008-09 Daphne Purves Grant from the International Federation of University Women (IFUW)** in Switzerland, and the 2007 New Zealand Rosemary Seymour Research and Archives Award.

While overseas, she was invited by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to revisit her Masters thesis – published as *Daughters of Development: The Stories of Women and Changing Environments* by Zed Books in 1999- in a plenary session of the Canadian Women's Studies Conference in Vancouver, and was invited to speak at the 14th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women in the USA.

Ms Sinith was also selected to participate in a weeklong graduate seminar with world-renowned feminist philosopher Professor Luce Irigaray in London.

"I truly feel the honour and responsibility that these awards and invitations convey. Awards like these typically come in small amounts, but they have huge significance in women's lives like mine. I value all the grants and will honour their goals of making changes towards a more just and healthy society," she says.

Peg Hutchison's note:

Dame Daphne Purves, in 1977, was the first New Zealander to become President of the International Federation of University Women. Contributions to the IFUW Scholarship Fund came from all over the world and the Wellington Branch of the NZ Federation of Graduate Women provides about \$1000 a year, taken from the proceeds of the hiring of Academic Dress for Capping. So each VUW graduand of 2007 can claim to have provided approximately 20c towards Sinith's Grant.

Dame Daphne lived in Dunedin and has recently passed away, just three weeks before her 100th birthday.

Article published in *VicNews* Monday 28 July. vicnews@vuw.ac.nz