

Dr. Nancy Turner

"Turner is a leader in the field of plant knowledge and traditional plant use by First Nations in western North America. Her work with First Nations communities in the documentation and, in some cases, rediscovery of their cultural heritage has helped to formulate and develop major public policy decisions on land use and economic development issues."



"Nancy is considered by her peers as the foremost ethnobotanist in Canada who has devoted her career to understanding the cultural context of plant uses," says Dr. John Schofield, dean of social sciences. "Her research with First Nations cultures has set the standard for collaborative research with indigenous people and demonstrates how important their knowledge of native plants and ecological interactions are for understanding the environment in those areas."

Turner, who holds a BSc from UVic and a PhD from UBC, began her career in the early '70s as an independent researcher affiliated with the Royal B.C. Museum. By the time she joined UVic in 1991, she was a widely acknowledged expert on the ethnobotany of B.C.

"I've been really lucky in learning from a whole generation of very knowledgeable First Nations elders, many of whom have now passed away," she says. "One of my real desires is to work with aboriginal elders to assist in any way I can to perpetuate their critically important knowledge."

Much of Turner's career has been spent doing just that. She presents workshops to communities on the ethnobotany of their area. She's the author or co-author of dozens of articles, monographs and books. She's also a teacher, public lecturer, media commentator, and supervisor of a team of graduate students working on various issues related to ethnobotany, conservation biology and the sustainable use of plants.

Turner says her research focus is now moving into "pulling together the things I've learned to see patterns in the way knowledge is learned and shared in relation to the natural world and how it works." Three more books are in the works, including a guide to the culturally important plants of Haida Gwaii, due out this spring.

Her many honours include:

- UVic Distinguished Alumni Award(2003)
 - Lawson Medal from the Canadian Botanical Association (2002)
 - Academic of the Year from the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of B.C. (2002)
 - Election to the Royal Society of Canada (1999)
 - Richard Evans Schultes Award (1997) from the U.S.-based Healing Forest Conservancy
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From Alex Inselberg, our soils and vegetation scientist:

I know Nancy personally through my network of botanical contacts, and from my years at the U of Victoria in the 1970s. Honestly, I cannot think of a more distinguished ethnobotanical scientist and humanist than Nancy. In my mind, she is at par with the likes of Wade Davis -- who also has roots in BC.

As someone to speak on the concept of the Mary Thomas Heritage Sanctuary, we could not have a finer, more appropriate and more experienced speaker. As an advocate for the work we have all been doing to protect the critically important habitat associated with the greater Salmon River delta, we could not have a better guest speaker.

Please let all your contacts in Salmon Arm and the surroundings know that Nancy Turner's presentation next Wednesday will be a very big and important event for Salmon Arm -- well worth participating in. We need to give Nancy every opportunity to engage with the audience next Wednesday -- as our profoundly honoured guest.

Articles:

1) UVic ethnobotanist named to Order of Canada:

<http://communications.uvic.ca/uvicinfo/announcement.php?id=342>

2) Here is more information on Nancy from a Feb. 2004 article in the Ring, the University of Victoria's Community Newspaper:

<http://ring.uvic.ca/04feb04/features/dist-prof.html>