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Dr. Catherine Hickson

Dr. Catherine Hickson completed her PhD at the University of British Columbia. As an undergraduate she witnessed the eruption of Mount St. Helens and wrote about the pyroclastic surge for her undergraduate Honours thesis. This work resulted in a number of professional papers and a career long association with Mount St. Helens. Originally planning to pursue a geological career in sedimentology, the eruption created an abrupt change to volcanology. However, given her background in sedimentology, she was able to take sedimentological concepts and apply them to volcanological processes. Her papers documenting facies changes and the characteristics of turbulent flow as manifested in pyroclastic deposits were ground breaking as most researchers in volcanology at the time had a background in igneous petrology and were not used to dealing with physical processes. After Mount St Helens, she completed her PhD thesis chronically the volcanic history of Wells Gray Provincial Park over its more than 3 million years of volcanic history. Since completing her thesis more than 30 years ago, she has maintained close ties with the park. The recent opening of the Thompson Rivers University Learning center was a landmark occasion. She was excited to see the dream of biologist and lichen specialist Trevor Goward for the establishment of a field research station come to fruition and hopes that it will attract more geological students to continue studies of the park she began so many years ago. Another connection Hickson has with Wells Gray is the discovery of what could be Canada's largest cave in 2018. Still waiting for park permits for exploration, she was excited to be part of the discovery process. Through her efforts, she was able to pull together work from the early 1980's in the form of the unpublished geological maps of Dr. Bert Struik. This geological mapping of a portion of the park around the cave was recently published in the Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences. When not focused on Wells Gray, Hickson is CEO of a geothermal project in Alberta "Alberta No. 1" and vice-president of Geothermal Canada (a not-for-profit organization supporting geothermal energy development in Canada).