



## SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

### **Honorary Degree Citations The degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, conferred on Dr. Morton Wednesday, June 16, 2010**

Mr. Chancellor, Alexandra Morton is a biologist and environmental activist of great courage and foresight. Unafraid to speak truth to power, she has earned the admiration of Canadians through her efforts to protect marine life, and most especially the orca and the wild Pacific salmon, two iconic cultural symbols. Indeed, for many, she is the Conscience of the Coast.

Her interest in nature began in childhood, and eventually led to pioneering research with marine mammals in California. In 1984, she settled in remote Echo Bay in the Broughton Archipelago, where she began a long-term study of cetacean activity. Over time she came to know the visiting whale pods and was also able to identify some one thousand dolphins. Her observations have added immeasurably to our knowledge of cetacean behaviour and ecology.

In the early 1990s, she began to notice a decline in whale and salmon populations and set out to discover why. Her research led to the conclusion that a rapidly growing salmon farming industry was not only driving out the orcas but also causing outbreaks of lethal infections of sea lice in wild juvenile Pacific salmon. She herself was widely criticized for linking salmon farms and wild salmon abundance. But as her commitment to the protection of wild salmon deepened, her methods became more, rather than less, rigorous and painstaking. And as this fact became more and more evident to her colleagues in the life sciences, the questions of academic credentials became – well – merely academic. And when her research began to appear in publications such as *Science* and the *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Science*, other scientists began to confirm her findings.

Her dedication to science communication has also had a profound influence on society. She has engaged with stakeholders at every level of both the public and private sectors, authored several books and numerous research papers, founded Raincoast Research Society, and founded Salmon Coast Field Station. Her great generosity of spirit also embraces the many young scientists whom she has mentored over the years.

In their totality, her contributions have broadened our awareness of the fragility of the marine ecosystem and underscored the pressing need to focus our efforts on conserving our wild salmon population. For her work, she has received numerous awards, including the Murray Newman Award for Excellence in Aquatic Conservation, the Eugene Rogers Environmental Award, and the Roland Michener Conservation Award. Today, we honour this exceptional individual.

Mr. Chancellor, I ask on behalf of the Senate of this University that you confer upon Alexandra Morton the degree Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*.