

John Esling, A Canado-American Original

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Research undertaken and lauded all over the world, leadership in international organizations, Royal Society membership, decades of SSHRC funding, the UVic Humanities Award for Research Excellence all attest to John Esling's outstanding career. Well-deserved as all of this recognition is, however, it doesn't capture what makes John special. One of the most original thinkers most of us have ever met, John frames questions in a way particular to him, always bringing new perspectives to bear. Conversation with him is a delight as one's views shift thanks to his particular vision of the world.

Even before his term as Chair of the Department of Linguistics, John demonstrated his care for the Department and the institution with deep engagement not typical of someone maintaining a stellar research profile. His interests and culture go far beyond the field in which he is famous. In one example among many I could cite, John found common ground with a Humanities scholar-in-residence from the Smithsonian whose specialty is ethnobotany from Antiquity to the Renaissance. John's intellectual curiosity, openness and hospitality made a huge difference the way UVic is remembered by our visitor and his partner.

Legions of graduate students have of course benefitted from John's guidance and his generosity. When an opportunity came for UVic doctoral students to join research groups at the Sorbonne, John was the only colleague in the Faculty of Humanities able and willing to take a team to Paris, launching those students onto the world stage in very short order.

Perhaps his roots in the Dakotas or the wisdom of the bees and other company he keeps have helped shape him, but whatever the source of the combination of brilliance and generosity that characterize John Esling, the academic world has greatly benefitted from his contributions. I am honoured to call him my colleague and my friend.