



June | Tom Pedersen, Oceanographer, Director, Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions

Who are you?

I am an oceanographer by training who directs the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions or PICS. I conduct research that will help us understand better how the earth works, and what we might do to improve our stewardship of it.

Why is it important?

It's the only planet we know of that can support life. Humans are changing the climate of earth, and changing it quickly; we must find ways to adapt to the changes that are happening (and coming!) And to slow down the rate of change by reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

What does your research involve?

For many years I worked to improve our understanding of the impact of changes imposed on the ocean over time by mother nature and more recently by human activities. I'm currently working with a team that seeks to improve how we can use hydropower more effectively in Canada to support increased use of renewable energy, especially the power of the wind.

What got you into the field of climate change science?

As a graduate student, I was trying to understand chemical variations in sediments near the Galapagos Islands. The only way I could explain things was to suggest that climate changes had happened over the past 100,000 years and that led me to get very curious about natural changes of climate, and then about human impacts on the earth's climate system.

Did you ever want to be something else?

Yes, an orchardist in the Okanagan where I grew up. But my curiosity about the earth and how it works geologically kept directing me down a different road.

What do you like most about your work?

Everything! But what makes it particularly exciting is being able to work with really committed, thoughtful colleagues who bubble with great ideas.

What are three achievements/findings/other things in your life you are proudest of?

1. My kids.
2. Helping to shape thinking about the operation of the ocean through time and the links between physical, biological and chemical phenomena in the sea.
3. Helping the academic community in BC now work to investigate options for improved climate-change policy.

What was your first summer job?

Picking cherries on the family orchard at age five. When I was eight, I made a total 39 dollars working on the orchard for the entire summer. That was enough to buy half a three-speed bicycle.

What 5 favourite artists/groups/pieces of music do you listen to on your ipod?

Elgar's cello concerto, Rachmaninov's third piano concerto, Crosby/Stills/Nash and Young, K.D. Lang, Paul Simon

What's your favourite colour?

Magenta

How do you get to work every day?

In my 10-year old Honda Civic (I don't live near a bus route)

What are your favorite things to do when you aren't working?

Grow vegetables, apples, pears, strawberries and raspberries in the back yard, play golf, play bridge, and sing in a choir

If you could meet one famous person for coffee who would it be?

Barack Obama

Why are you here at UVic?

It's one of the best places in the world in which to work: great setting, excellent collegiality, wonderful people, and a can-do attitude.

What 5 words would you use to describe yourself?

Curious, optimistic, impatient, broad interests

What advice do you have for a young person wanting to pursue a career in your field?

Learn mathematics, even if your interest is not in science. Stay open-minded. Read, read, read – everything, from poetry to science to philosophy to many newspapers. Think critically. Question conventional wisdom and authority, always constructively. And work toward having human society deal quickly and seriously with the climate-change challenge that faces us. The world needs you. Go for it.

To learn more about Tom Pedersen visit http://www.pics.uvic.ca/pc_profiles.php#pedersen

