

**2024 American Oat Workers' Conference
Award for Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement**



Nicholas (Nick) A. Tinker, PhD

Nick Tinker is the original Canadian “Ace of Base” – in the nucleotide sense of the word!

Somewhat more seriously though, those of us who have had the pleasure and honor of working with Nick (and appreciating his creative sense of humor) know that he is kind, thoughtful, brilliant, and innovative.

Nick Tinker was born in Seattle but eventually settled with his parents in the Toronto area, where his mother was a talented artist and his father an eclectic biochemistry professor at the University of Toronto. His love of agriculture and experience working on a small dairy farm motivated his undergraduate and M.Sc. studies in crop breeding at the University of Guelph. There he first met his future wife Doris, and for a period of time motorcycle-commuted (a la Neil Peart, another famous Ontarian) to/from Montreal after he relocated there to pursue a Ph.D. working on molecular marker development, QTL mapping and genetic simulation at McGill University under Diane Mather. He brought these skills to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Ottawa in 1996 where he spent his entire professional career working on oat and barley genomics and marker-assisted breeding.

Nick is famous in the oat community for his leadership of the AOWC and international research initiatives like the Collaborative Oat Research Enterprise, or CORE, and the oat pangenome sequencing effort, or PanOat; for outstanding research publications that pioneered the use of molecular markers and next-generation sequencing approaches; for developing software for genomic analysis and breeding; and for creative, colorful, and refreshingly quirky scientific presentations. Nick’s critical scientific contributions not only in the identification of QTLs affecting genetic control of key oat productivity and quality traits, but also in reconciling highly complex linkage relationships and maps affected by heterozygous structural variants, were essential in developing the 21st Century oat breeding and genetics paradigms. However, he is also a devoted family man who helped Doris raise a wonderful and successful daughter, Holly,

and who diligently attended to his father in Nova Scotia during his declining days. Upon hearing of Nick's impending retirement, a common reaction of many of us was, "*what, Nick's retiring already – why so soon?*" Of course, we now know that Nick's retirement may have been *de jure* but is not *de facto*. We hope and expect that his contributions toward resolving the riddles and enigmas of oat genome haplotags, haplotigs, structural variation, and evolution will continue into the indefinite future.