

LANCE GOODWIN (1963–2020)

Lance Goodwin was born in Invermere, British Columbia. The family moved to Atlin in northwestern British Columbia in 1967, where they were owners of a guiding and outfitting business and a concessionary area stretching from the White Pass to the icefields of the Saint Elias Mountains. It was in this vast area that Goodwin became adept at wilderness travel, from the forest and rivers to the high alpine, and absorbed an all-encompassing knowledge of the natural world.

His marriage to Sian Williams in 2000 brought him into the sphere of the Arctic Institute of North America and the Kluane Lake Research Station where he worked initially as an on-call contractor, building and refurbishing much of the existing infrastructure, and later as co-manager of the site, overseeing a major rebuild of the station. This brought him in contact with a host of research scientists and their students, from the experienced to the neophytes, who came to rely on him for his expertise and his depth of knowledge of flora, fauna, from butterflies to moose. I paraphrase, with permission, an observation by a senior and highly experienced glaciologist on arriving at the station for a season in the field: "... from there, a constant string of borrowing, building, fixing as we prepared. Need an engine mount for an expedition sled, pipe grease, crampons sharpened, fuel stabilizer, a generator overhaul, a lesson in carburetor performance, or helicopter cargo nets loaded? Lance, jogging in cros and coveralls from one job to the next, his constant companion a black Labrador at his heels."

The town and gown syndrome exists even at remote research stations but Goodwin would have none of this. He brought together people from the local communities, the research stations, and from Whitehorse. The catalyst for this was the now legendary Thursday evening rugby game, played on a rough pitch on the shore of Kluane Lake. The games were played regardless of conditions, and when the pitch flooded, which it was wont to do, they were played in knee-deep water requiring a lifeguard rather than a referee.

Not physically a big man, he was enormously powerful, which was mostly an asset, but at times a frustration. Attempting to loosen a bolt or pipe joint set by Goodwin, one was in for a major struggle. Those using the washroom or kitchen after him were best armed with a pipe wrench to loosen the taps.



Lance Goodwin (Photo courtesy of Dan Shugar).

Goodwin was in constant demand from international film companies, sometimes to guide ski-mountaineering promotional videos, and sometimes to film his favourite animal—the wolverine—a creature with which he shared a remarkable affinity. He was engaged by wildlife authorities, particularly in the western United States, in the reintroduction of the species. His talents were extraordinary, a builder skilled in all trades: aircraft engineer, machinist, welder, award-winning hunting guide, photographer with images on permanent display at the MacBride Museum in Whitehorse. We worked together for some 25 years in the Saint Elias Mountains, an environment that can present its own challenges! The occasions when the immediate future looked rather bleak were greeted by Goodwin with "We can deal with this; we'll be alright, mate!"

Goodwin died in Whitehorse, attended by family, of an aggressive cancer on 8 June 2020. The initial diagnosis was received with some disbelief; just days before he had, with his usual energy, been teaching a log-milling course to members of the Kluane First Nation.

Largely self-taught, he had a huge appetite for knowledge. During the final days I offered some books, something light, diverting perhaps? "Not to bother," he replied. "Got this splendid book on the genealogy of northern trout—always fascinated me."

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