

Lisa Poirier passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on 15 October 2023. She was an outstanding teacher, mentor, researcher, entomologist, and friend. She was a rich source of entomological knowledge and engagingly answered Entomology questions from students, colleagues, and the public alike. Lisa was an important member of the entomological community in British Columbia, Canada and beyond.

Lisa was born in North Cobalt, Ontario on 7 May 1963. Her mother was British Indian—born of British parents but raised in India. She moved to England just before the outbreak of WWII. She met Lisa’s father, a Canadian Serviceman, during the war and moved to Canada after the war. Lisa’s father was a school principal. She had two much older sisters, Hilary and Caroline, so she was the baby of the family. Lisa was very close to her parents; she was proud of her family, and she traveled to England a few years ago to donate her grandfather’s medals—awarded in India in the early 1900s—to a museum.

Lisa met her husband Mike in high school in 1979 and they were together until her death. They went to university together and got married after she graduated with a BSc in Biology and Ecology from the University of Guelph in 1984. After the wedding, they piled all their belongings into their car, including one large and very opinionated cat (who howled the whole way over), and drove to BC. Sylvester (the cat) got sick on the long drive, and they spent all their wedding gift money on saving him. He lived to a ripe old age.

Lisa completed the Master of Pest Management Program at Simon Fraser University in 1989, and immediately enrolled in a PhD program under the supervision of Dr John Borden. Lisa’s PhD dissertation (1995) focused on the role of oral exudate in western spruce budworm. She was a Board-Certified Entomologist, a professional designation offered by the Entomological Society of America. Between 1996 and 2001, she held positions as Sessional Instructor at the University College of the Fraser Valley and the University of British Columbia, and as Senior Laboratory Technician at UBC.

In 2001, she was recruited to the University of Northern British Columbia starting as an Instructor V, primarily to cover sabbatical leaves for Forest Health faculty. This required knowledge of both pathogens and insect pests—material normally co-taught by a pathologist and an entomologist. Lisa was one of the few people who could handle both, and she permanently took over the Forest Entomology part when Staffan Lindgren retired in 2015. From the beginning, Lisa demonstrated an incredible versatility and breadth in teaching, making her indispensable to the Biology and Forestry degrees. She was a passionate instructor and taught 18 different undergraduate courses, one graduate course, and supervised five independent courses or reports. She won an Excellence in Teaching award at SFU while still a graduate student. At UNBC, students nominated her twice for excellence in teaching. One of her former students wrote: *“Lisa was always so kind and supportive of me as a student, and I will always credit her with teaching me how to write scientifically in her ecology class. She was an excellent teacher who really cared about her students. She was also just an incredibly kind person”*.

In 2007, Lisa was promoted to Assistant Professor, tenure track. She was granted tenure



UNBC photo

Lisa Marie Poirier
(7 May 1963 – 15 October 2023)

on 1 July 2012, and promoted to Associate Professor in 2018. She contributed greatly to the university by serving on a number of committees. When she took over primary responsibility for the Entomology course in the Biology program, she put together an extensive lab guide (<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/unbcbiol322/>) which was provided to students. She also brought order to the insect teaching collection, and a plaque has been erected to commemorate her efforts. Lisa also served her profession, notably as President of the Entomological Society of British Columbia 2018-2019, and by organizing and contributing to conferences, e.g., the Western Forest Insect Work Conference. Lisa was passionate about Entomology and frequently shared her expertise by responding to questions from the public or media and giving presentations in the community. She was also an e-mentor for the Ms. Infinity program of the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology, encouraging female youth into STEM fields.

Lisa was author or co-author of 15 peer reviewed publications, with two more upcoming, and she presented numerous papers at conferences on a variety of topics, including mosquito biology, biodiversity, and plant-insect interactions. Her work on the biodiversity of insects in downtown Prince George versus in the forest was particularly important as most biodiversity surveys tend to focus on non-urban areas or parks, and neglect downtown areas. She supervised three graduate students and was a member of the supervisory committee for an additional 11 graduate students.

Lisa inherited her love for animals from her mother, who was always surrounded by various animals; for example, her mother trained Siberian Huskies for the Iditarod and other dog races. Lisa's mother was also always rescuing animals on the point of death to give them "a nice place to die", but they usually ended up surviving and thriving under Lisa's mother's care. Consequently, Lisa grew up with a collection of animals, including monkeys! This instilled in her a great life-long love of animals. She loved giant dog breeds, in particular, she raised Bernese and Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs, which were socialized by bringing these beautiful dogs to UNBC for meet-and-greets with faculty and staff. Her dogs, as well as Mike, were always her research assistants and traveled deep into the bush on trap and insect collection expeditions. She always insisted that everyone, particularly the dogs, had high quality packs so they could carry their own water, food, and snacks. Lisa also rescued numerous cats, and even birds. Joshua, her cockatiel, was 35 years old when he died earlier this year, one year short of the Guinness Book of Records.

Lisa's passing was announced by UNBC by lowering the flags at half-mast. She is greatly missed by her many friends and colleagues.

Gail Anderson and Staffan Lindgren



M. Poirier