

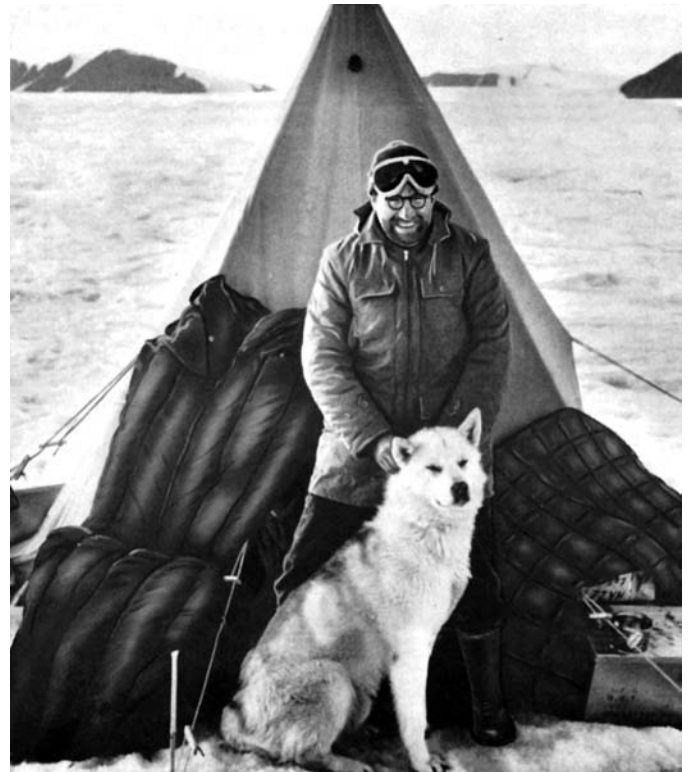
JAMES ROBERT LOTZ (1929–2015)

Jim Lotz was a writer, teacher, and critic whose ideas on community economic development were founded on his experience in the Canadian North during the 1960s. He was born in Liverpool, England, on 12 January 1929. Upon fulfilling his national service in the Royal Air Force he attended Manchester University. After graduating in geography in 1952, he worked for a British trading company in Nigeria. As a special constable stationed in Kano during a riot, he rescued a local man from the fury of a mob, for which he received an award for bravery. Jim was of the generation that came of age in Britain when high hopes for social transformation came up against the shortages and drabness of post-war life there. Disillusioned with colonialism in Africa and the possibilities in England, Jim emigrated to Canada in 1954.

He soon enrolled in geography at McGill University, where he received his Master of Science. He landed a summer job at McGill's Subarctic Research Laboratory in Knob Lake, Quebec, and so embarked on a life-long love affair with the Canadian North. He spent five summers as a meteorological and glaciological observer, first at Knob Lake and then on northern Ellesmere Island, where he was a member of Operation Hazen, the research expedition led by Geoff Hattersley-Smith. Jim felt that he had been privileged to participate in a marvelous adventure. He wrote about it years later in *The Best Journey in the World: Adventures in Canada's High Arctic* (2006), a title that revealed as much about Jim as about Operation Hazen. For him, that vast, open, and uncontrolled space was the very opposite of the Britain he had left.

In 1959 he met Pat Wicks, a librarian in training at the Arctic Institute (then located next to the McGill campus), and they married in December. They soon had two daughters, Annette (who predeceased him) and Fiona. In 1960 Jim took a job in Ottawa as community planning officer in the Industrial Division of the Department of Northern Affairs. Moving from physical geography to human geography, he conducted a study of the squatters of Whitehorse, which was followed by community studies in Dawson City and Inuvik. In 1963 he moved to the Department's Northern Coordination and Research Centre (NCRC), where his research focused on the Yukon Territory. NCRC was then the chief vehicle for social scientific (mainly anthropological) research in the North, as government took up the task of "northern development." NCRC seemed to him the ideal place from which to challenge both irrational bureaucracy and unjust social change.

The next year Jim took leave to enroll in the newly minted PhD program in geography at the University of British Columbia. The department, at that time insecure about the nature and scope of its own discipline, was made uneasy by a man with over 10 years of work and travel experience from equatorial Africa to the High Arctic, and they parted ways after a year. But many of his fellow graduate students



Jim Lotz, Gilman Glacier, northern Ellesmere Island, 1957.

very much appreciated his perspectives from outside the box of geography as then taught. He was then thinking, not least from his own experience, about the psychology of the colonizer and the colonized and why the ways and customs of Ottawa bureaucrats might be at least as important to study as those of northern Aboriginal people. Having a keen sense of the absurd, Jim often condensed his insights in witty and memorable aphorisms.

Soon after his return to Ottawa, Jim left government service to teach at St. Paul's University, where he became assistant director of the Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology. There, with minimal resources, and as an outsider in the academic world, he encouraged and helped many young scholars to obtain research opportunities and exposure. He would invite new researchers to his house and, with an inimitable mix of ideas, anecdotes, and irreverent wit, spend hours sharing his experience, building enthusiasm, urging the intellectual adventure. He delighted in the idea of others' going out to do the kind of work he believed in and then took pleasure and pride in their reports and books. As part of his energetic support for northern research, he conceived and then edited a volume entitled *Pilot, Not Commander: Essays in memory of Diamond Jenness* (1971).

Jim taught briefly at the Coady Institute in Antigonish, the home of the cooperative movement, which seemed a natural progression for him. In 1973, Jim and Pat moved to Halifax, where they spent the rest of their lives. Jim became

a freelance writer, consultant, and teacher. There was never too much ink for Jim's pen. He travelled the world as a community development specialist. He wanted to learn as much as to teach, always concerned about those who lived on the margins of society and how they might better themselves. While in Lesotho, he was perceptively nicknamed *lehlo-honolo* 'lucky, happy, cheerful.' In 2012 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Saint Mary's University.

Jim spent much of his first decade in Canada in the North, during a critical period of transition there. Science was moving from reconnaissance to focused and methodical field research, and government administration, from laissez-faire to directed social change. These changes were conceived in a time of hope and confidence in Canada's future, with many good intentions. Yet those with authority to implement them were also confident that they knew what was best, and they saw no need to seek the views of those who would be affected by their plans. Good intentions were accompanied and soon overshadowed by dreams of untrammelled resource and industrial development in the North. The experience of those years would deeply affect Jim's perception of his new country and of himself.

In *Northern Realities* (1970), Jim combined a popular geography of the Yukon with a wry and perceptive commentary on Yukon society and a critique of prevailing conceptions of northern development. It was widely read at the time and still belongs on the shelves of those with an interest in the Canadian North. Jim cast an equally skeptical eye on government planners and experts, resource developers, national visionaries, northern small-town elites and boosters, and the promoters of good works, however well intentioned. He had no time for political or ideological "isms." He was old and experienced enough not to be seduced by the zeitgeist of middle-class youth in the 1960s, or by academic fashion. He organized his thinking in terms of people and place, of local communities, rather than the reified entities of class and ethnicity. He framed issues in terms of processes rather than categories, seeing northern development in terms of social change and culture contact.

Jim's vision of northern development was helping local people to build their own capacity to better themselves by their own lights, with the aid of scientific knowledge. The challenge of the North in his view was not, as many boosters of the day insisted, to exploit a vast treasure house of riches and settle multitudes of people. It was instead to develop a modest, harmonious society in which Aboriginal people and new Northerners could build a future together, strengthened by the values of self-reliance and rootedness that he saw in so many rural and isolated locales around the world. Jim was not romantic about this. He was as aware of the foibles and failings of local communities as of their strengths, but he was ever optimistic about the vision. Jim's experience during those early years of northern development shaped his ideas on community economic development and social action, and led to his first book on the subject, *Understanding Canada* (1977), at once a commentary and a practical manual for action.

Although he returned to the North only occasionally after 1970, Jim never forgot his time there. He returned to the North in his writing to the end of his days, in articles, essays, and even in detective fiction. *The Gold of the Yukon* (2012) was a reminiscence and meditation on his time there. He saw the North as a place of both spiritual renewal and rational scientific inquiry. The High Arctic had been for him a place of extraordinary beauty and serenity, a place of self-discovery where life, stripped to the bare essentials, was necessarily reliant on self-help, mutual aid, and cooperation. In the North, one could reinvent one's self. He retained an admiration for the old-time, hard-living gold panners and sluicers who had stayed in the country, and who lived for the search as much as the find, even if he did not share all of their sentiments. Such personal feelings about the North are not to be found in the scientific literature of the time or in the writings of today's academics.

Jim considered that he had lived a full and fortunate life, having done things in Canada beyond anything he dreamed of while growing up during the war in working-class Liverpool. Soon after the death of his wife Pat, whom he had cared for throughout her declining years, Jim was told he had terminal cancer. He was satisfied to let the illness take its course, yet he outlived the doctors' predictions by a wide mark. Hale and irrepressible to the last, he was always a joy to visit, seated in his favourite chair below a scene of Dawson in winter by Yukon artist Ted Harrison and surrounded by books. Jim Lotz died at the age of 85 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 2 January 2015, pleased to know that his final memoir, *Sharing the Journey* (2015), was in press.

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