

MATTHIAS JAKOB (1966-2022)

By BGC Engineering Inc.



It is with profound sadness that we write about the passing of our dear colleague Matthias Jakob who passed away suddenly on October 16, 2022. Matthias was an expert in landslide hazard and risk assessment of complex geohazards and his expertise cascaded across the world in academia and among clients in our industry.

A curious and young, but well-travelled, Matthias chose geography as his primary area of study while in high school in Germany and followed this up with a BSc in Geography at the University of Regensburg. After an intermediate year of studies at the University of Colorado, he undertook his master's degree at the University of Heidelberg studying rock glaciers in the Khumbu Himalayas of Nepal.

Matthias moved to Canada to complete his PhD at the University of British Columbia (UBC), with Michael Bovis as his supervisor. He completed his thesis in 1996 on the "Morphometric and Geotechnical Controls on Debris Flow Frequency and Magnitude, Southwestern BC", a topic he would continue to study, throughout his career. Three years later, after spending time in consulting, he returned to UBC for a post-doctoral fellowship working with Oldrich Hungr and developing a new rockfall hazard rating for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

BGC Engineering Inc. welcomed Matthias to the team in 2003 where he enjoyed the diversity of working among geoscientists, technicians, engineering geologists and geotechnical engineers. Throughout his career, Matthias made significant contributions to the scientific community on the understanding of steep creek processes, and authored over 100 journal articles, conference papers and book chapters. He co-edited with Oldrich Hungr a book in 2005 on debris flows and debris avalanches, which won the Geological Society of America's prestigious Burwell Award in 2009. During his career at BGC, Matthias was the recipient of the J. Ross MacKay Award (from the Canadian Geomorphology Research Group) for contributions to the application of geomorphic knowledge, the Westerman Award (highest award for a geoscientist in Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia) for his work on debris flow risk in communities, as well as the Thomas Roy Award (from the CGS's Engineering Geology Division) for excellence in engineering geology.

Matthias was a much sought-after guest lecturer and keynote speaker in our industry and beyond. He was passionate about educating others on the impacts of a changing climate and

actively reduced his personal climate impact. Most recently, in late September 2022, he was a keynote speaker at the CGS Young Professionals Conference in Banff, AB.

Those who worked with Matthias benefited from his mentoring, commitment to high quality work, and technical excellence. He is remembered for his creative problem solving, drive for continuous improvement in methods and for making work fun. Field work with Matthias was always an adventure remembered. His legacy will live on through the many talented engineers and geoscientists whom he mentored throughout his career.

Apart from his geoscience excellence, Matthias was a passionate outdoors enthusiast. He was no stranger to climbing mountains, hiking, cross-country skiing and physical fitness. He was proud of his cabin near Squamish, BC, and loved hosting colleagues, clients and friends at the oasis he created. Matthias was also an avid gardener who loved plants and could recite the Latin names of many species.

Whatever he was working on and wherever his adventures took him, he was happiest when with his family, his partner Monica and daughter Lucie.