

# More Than Sprinklers

## West Van Irrigation Builds on 30 Years of Local Service

◆ By Patricia Barnes

For Adam Snow, there is a simple philosophy behind running a good business: do good work, be honest with people and keep getting better.

It's an approach that has helped guide West Van Irrigation through more than three decades of serving the North Shore—and through an industry that has become considerably more sophisticated along the way.

West Van Irrigation has cared for residential and commercial irrigation systems since 1995, designing, installing, repairing, and maintaining systems throughout the community. Through Cypress Landscape Lighting, the team also designs, installs and services outdoor lighting.

But spend a little time talking with Adam, the company's owner, and it quickly becomes apparent that irrigation involves much more than making sure the sprinklers turn on.

"There's a lot more problem-solving involved than people might expect. Every property is different, and good irrigation means understanding the landscape, how water moves through it, and how all the pieces work together."

### Carrying a Local Legacy Forward

Adam's chapter in the West Van Irrigation story began in 2015, but the company's roots stretch back much further.

North Shore local and avid outdoorsman Travis Kubin acquired the business early in its history and spent roughly two decades building it through strong customer relationships, honest work and personal service.

Adam arrived at WVI as a technician with about 10 years of irrigation experience and eventually became Service Manager. Then, in 2018, the company, and Adam, faced an unexpected turning point when Travis passed away.

Adam made the decision to purchase the business.

Since then, his goal has been to preserve the qualities that made WVI successful while continuing to move the company forward.

"We've tried to carry forward the qualities that made Travis and WVI successful—being honest, customer-focused, practical, and easy to deal with—while constantly improving how we operate," he says.

That balance between preserving what works and continually looking for ways to improve has become a defining part of the company's culture.

### A Surprisingly Technical Business

Modern irrigation bears little resemblance to the simple image of a sprinkler running across a lawn.

Modern irrigation is much more about managing water intelligently than simply turning sprinklers on and off. A well-designed system has to respond to the landscape, changing weather, available water, and how the property is actually being used.

With newer smart systems, WVI can also monitor irrigation remotely, identify abnormal water use, respond to changing weather, and often spot problems before the homeowner knows they're there.

For Adam, that evolution is particularly important as communities become increasingly conscious of water use.

"The real objective is a healthy landscape using the right amount of water, in the right place, at the right time," he says.

The company has increasingly focused on water-efficient irrigation design, drip irrigation, smart controllers and flow monitoring, while also helping customers maintain existing systems so they operate as efficiently as possible.

Behind the scenes, WVI has evolved too. Adam and his team have invested in training, scheduling, communication, documentation and technology with the goal of creating a more consistent service experience without losing the personal relationships and local knowledge on which the company was built.

### Building a Good Company

Adam's enthusiasm for improvement extends beyond irrigation.

As he moved from technician to owner, he became increasingly interested in what makes a service company work well: developing people, creating better systems and building an organization customers and employees can depend upon.

One lesson in particular has stuck with him.

"A reputation is built one promise at a time," he says.

Growth, he has learned, isn't necessarily the best measure of success. Without strong people and processes underneath it, getting bigger can simply magnify existing problems.

"I've become much more interested in building a good company than simply building a big one," Adam says.

That philosophy includes creating opportunities for the people who work there. WVI remains a family business, but Adam says the idea of family extends beyond ownership. He wants employees to be able to build careers, take on greater responsibility, develop their skills and grow alongside the company.

And although the work is taken seriously, the team tries not to take itself too seriously.

"We have a great team, and we try to have some fun along the way," he says.

That team is also what keeps Adam motivated when running a business becomes difficult. Customers depend on the company, but so do employees and their families. He feels a responsibility to continue strengthening the organization and creating opportunities for the people who have chosen to be part of it.



### Rooted in the North Shore

After more than 30 years, West Van Irrigation's connection to the North Shore can be seen in longstanding relationships as much as completed projects.

Some customers have been with the company for years, recommending WVI to neighbours or calling again when they move to a new home. For Adam, those relationships are a reminder that a local company's success is closely connected to the community around it.

"A local business depends on its community in a very real way," he says.

WVI has supported community organizations and causes through its seasonal Giving Tree initiative, and Adam hopes community involvement will become a larger part of the company as it continues to develop.

Looking ahead, however, his ambitions remain consistent with the philosophy that has guided the business so far: better rather than simply bigger.

The company is continuing to explore smarter irrigation, remote monitoring and water-efficient upgrades while developing Cypress Landscape Lighting and investing in its employees and future leaders.

Adam sees that as the next evolution of a company that has already spent more than three decades adapting, learning and serving its neighbours.

"I'm probably most proud of the people behind the company," he says. "After more than three decades serving the North Shore, I think the exciting part is that we're still learning—and we're excited about what we can build from here."



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