

Northern BC Heliski Operator Reports Near-Record Snowpack While Southern BC Wrestles With Rain

Last Frontier Heliskiing's guides credit latitude and glacial terrain for its tenure staying reliable through two seasons of atmospheric river activity

STEWART, BRITISH COLUMBIA , CANADA, July 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- While heliski and ski

“

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*Cliff Umpleby, Last Frontier's
Director of Operations and
Lead Guide*

resort operators across southern British Columbia have spent the past two seasons managing rain crust from atmospheric river storms, Last Frontier Heliskiing's tenure near the Alaska border held close to six metres of snow on its glaciers this season, with guests still skiing knee-deep powder on the final days of the operation.

The company, which runs the world's largest contiguous heliski tenure at 10,100 square kilometres from its Bell 2

Lodge and Ripley Creek Inn properties, says the difference comes down to geography rather than luck. Cliff Umpleby, Last Frontier's Director of Operations and Lead Guide, has guided the tenure for 29 seasons and has watched atmospheric river events, storms carrying warm, moist Pacific air, shift from an occasional occurrence to a regular feature of the BC winter.

"When the warm storms come in from the South Pacific, they tend to push into southern BC first," Umpleby said. "By the time they reach us, they've usually cooled enough that what's falling as rain in the south is still falling as snow up north."

Umpleby points to three factors behind the tenure's consistency: its position at 56 degrees north, six degrees further north than Revelstoke and five further than Bella Coola; its location in the transition zone between coastal and continental snowpacks, which gives guides flexibility to move between terrain types depending on conditions; and roughly 7,800 square kilometres of skiable terrain in or adjacent to glaciated zones, which keeps high-elevation temperatures low even when a storm crosses the freezing line partway up a mountain.

Umpleby is careful not to overstate the trend. Glacial recession is visible in terrain he has guided for three decades, and operating temperatures that once ran consistently around minus 15 now run closer to minus 10 or minus 7. But he pushes back on predictions that the shift spells the

end of reliable heliskiing in the region.

"Twelve years ago, a peer told me heliskiing would be gone within a decade because of climate change," Umpleby said. "This past season, we were operating in six metres of snow. That wasn't right."

Last Frontier's full account of the geography behind its snowpack reliability, including further detail on freezing levels and terrain access, is available at: <https://www.lastfrontierheli.com/news/why-the-snow-stays-north-a-guides-look-at-the-geography-of-reliable-heliskiing/>

About Last Frontier Heliskiing

Last Frontier Heliskiing operates two remote lodges, Bell 2 Lodge and Ripley Creek Inn, in Northern British Columbia, offering access to the world's largest single contiguous heliski tenure at 10,100 square kilometres. Founded in 1996, the company runs exclusively in small groups of four guests per guide. More information is available at lastfrontierheli.com.

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