

POWELL RIVERITES BY CHOICE

By Margy Lutz

“Have you ever thought about living in a different country?” I asked as we drove along Highway 101 towards Lund. “Well, now that you mention it, I’ve been thinking about it myself.” replied my husband. How could this be; two Americans choosing to make such a huge change later in life?



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It all began in the summer of 2000. We were living in a suburb of Los Angeles; true ‘city folk’, but each year we loved to get away for two weeks of vacation in the outdoors. That year, we decided to start our vacation in Powell River. Little did we know where that decision would lead us.

After we landed at the Powell River Airport (served by Pacific Coastal Airlines), we rented a car at the terminal. We loaded

our camping gear and drove straight to the Willingdon Beach Campsite at the edge of town. What a unique seaside spot, with RV and tent sites in a forested area right on the Strait of Georgia. Perfect for hungry campers, this park is within walking distance of several restaurants. Using Willingdon Beach as our headquarters, we hiked, kayaked, explored, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves out in the backcountry, and in town.

We were so taken with the lifestyle in Powell River that we returned in December to see if we could handle the winters. The answer was a resounding “yes”, but we couldn’t find suitable property for our part-time visitor status.

The next summer, Powell River drew us back. And that’s the real beginning of our story. We rented a boat to explore Powell Lake, and saw the most amazing sight: float cabins dotting the shoreline. We were so excited that we asked the proprietor at the boat rental if there were any for sale. He said there was one, but he was sure we wouldn’t like it. The cabin was right next to a huge rock wall. He didn’t know that my husband is an

amateur geologist, or that I love to collect rocks. This was the turning point of our lives.

Yes, we had to return to LA for a few years to complete our careers, but every holiday we returned to our float cabin on the lake. We had started living our dream. After we retired (early for both of us), we wanted to live the dream full-time. Because we are U.S. citizens, that meant we needed to apply for permanent residency. It was a huge step, but a step we took with great enthusiasm.



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Canada doesn't have an immigrant category for retirees; we applied for permanent residency as 'skilled workers'. I had just enough 'points' to qualify. Many applicants navigate the process alone quite successfully. For us, the paperwork seemed daunting, so we contacted an immigration lawyer in Vancouver. When we applied in 2006 we were told to anticipate a two year wait. In December 2007 we received our entry visas, and by February 2008 were officially landed. What a happy day!

Powell River is like that. Many people come here on vacation or to visit family or friends, and stay for a lifetime. For each of us the call is a bit different, but the result is the same. We become part of a community of people who are caring, self-reliant, and have a different sense of purpose. Having the ocean in our front yard and the wilderness out back isn't bad either. Come to Powell River on a vacation of your own. But, be careful – you might want to stay forever.

