



# SOAR

Inflight  
Magazine for  
Pacific Coastal  
Airlines

## Keepers of the land

**Eat. Play. Explore.**

The paradise that is  
Penticton

**There's hope in  
the air**

PCA strengthens its  
commitment to Hope Air

A breathtaking new  
documentary from the heart  
of the Great Bear Rainforest





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**Interior BC Lakefront Estate:** Relax, entertain and play on this stunning property! Lodge-like 4560sqft log home. **Nimpo Lake** is known for easy float plane access, and this property has a private dock, float plane ramp and boathouse, in addition to a second lakefront residence and a large workshop. 1.47 acres on **Nimpo Lake**, in the beautiful **Chilcotin** region. **\$1,698,000**



**Site 52 Hernando Island:** Surrounded by nature, this oceanfront island retreat is on the **NE** side of **Hernando Island**, overlooking the **Strait of Georgia**. The 3193sqft home offers a lodge-like feel, with extensive oceanfront windows, a large central living room and beautiful wood finishing throughout. This shared interest sale includes the exclusive use of site 52 as well as part ownership in 2200 acre **Hernando Island**. **\$1,650,000**

**Bowser Oceanfront:** Ocean and mountain views welcome you at this exceptional oceanfront lot! With a beautiful, sandy walk-on beach out front of the property and miles of beach to explore at low tide, this property offers amazing west coast living. There is BC Hydro power, water and a septic system (unpermitted) in place. A short drive from **Courtenay** and **Qualicum Beach-Parksville**. **\$859,000**

**Water Lot Lease, West Coast Vancouver Island:** Looking for somewhere on the coast to place a float home? To create a base for kayaking, fishing and other west coast adventures? This 0.151 hectare ocean lease is specifically for a recreational float cabin! Tucked along the northern coast of **Concepcion Bay** on the east coast of **Bligh Island**, in **Nootka Sound**, with 18 years remaining on the 30 year lease.

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# HONOUR, SERVICE AND CHARITY GOLF!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**A**s we embrace the beauty of spring and look forward to the warmth of summer, we want to express our gratitude for choosing to soar with us at Pacific Coastal Airlines. With longer days and brighter skies ahead, we're delighted to share some exciting updates in our spring and summer schedule.

We're thrilled to announce the addition of extra flight options between Vancouver and Tofino, as well as Vancouver and Penticton. Additionally, we have increased capacity to Bella Bella, Port Hardy, Bella Coola, Penticton and Tofino. Plus, we're eagerly preparing for the launch of our newest route from Comox to Kelowna, scheduled to take off on June 25 as part of our summer schedule. This expansion opens up even more seamless travel experiences between Vancouver Island and the Okanagan region.

We are also diligently preparing for our 30th Memorial Charity Golf Tournament, happening at Mayfair Lakes Golf and Country Club on May 30. This event is close to our hearts, as all proceeds directly benefit two BC-based charities and support three scholarships aimed at Indigenous youth and BC students pursuing careers in aviation and the aerospace sector. Your participation in our silent auction, generously supported by our partners, helps us make a meaningful impact in our community.

So, get ready to bid on some incredible prizes! We've lined up fantastic offerings including a Surf and Stay package with Long Beach Lodge Resort in Tofino, a relaxing getaway at Kwa'lilas Hotel in Port Hardy, and a

truly unforgettable experience that awaits with Shearwater Resort in Bella Bella, which is generously donating an all-inclusive five-night stay, complete with thrilling fishing adventures! You can view our silent auction online [here](#).

We're also bursting with pride to share some truly exhilarating news with you—Mediacorp Canada Inc., has recognized Pacific Coastal Airlines as one of Canada's Top Small & Medium Employers!

This recognition highlights our team's unwavering dedication to fostering an exceptional workplace environment that prioritizes employee well-being, growth and satisfaction. Visit our [website](#) to read more about this recognition and to explore current job opportunities if you're interested in joining our team and a career in aviation.

Whether you're embarking on a solo adventure, a family vacation or a business trip, we're honoured to be a part of your travel story. Thank you for choosing us as your trusted travel partner, and we look forward to welcoming you on board soon! 🇨🇦

Warm regards,

**Quentin Smith**



# THE VIEWS ARE CALLING.

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## MEET A PACIFIC COASTAL EMPLOYEE: GUILLAUME



**Position:** Cargo Agent

**Location:** Vancouver, BC

**Time with PASCO:** 9 months

**Job description:** I am part of the Pacific Coastal Airlines cargo team. We receive, process and send cargo through the PCA network, while ensuring air safety.

### Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in Madagascar and grew up in Reunion Island, a French Island in the Indian Ocean.

### What path did you take to get to this job?

I initially graduated with a master's degree in business, majoring in information systems engineering, and worked in Paris. Then I decided to pursue a career change and came to Canada to do my flight training, and worked for my flight school as a flight dispatcher for one and a half years. After that, I worked for the francophone school district (CSF) for almost a year just before getting my current job.

### What do you like best about this job?

Being at an international airport and being close to airplanes every day.

### What are your hobbies outside of the job?

I enjoy spending time with friends, going for long walks and watching movies and NBA.

### What is your favourite thing to do in your city?

I really enjoy going to Granville Island for a walk and some tasty food.

## PENTICTON



Burgers and beers at Slackwater Brewing. Destination BC, @vancouverfoodie

## The paradise that is Penticton

By Chloe Sjuberg

If you're looking for a one-of-a-kind Okanagan getaway this summer, consider the Pacific Coastal Airlines destination of Penticton. Its spectacular natural landscape is ripe for outdoor adventures of all kinds, and its lush agricultural climate makes it a paradise for local food and wine enthusiasts.

Penticton is a small city of about 30,000 people, nestled in between two lakes, cradled by mountains and hills lined with rolling vineyards and orchards. Look up and you'll see PENTICTON in large white letters

on the side of Munson Mountain, mimicking the Hollywood sign. This quirky landmark reflects Penticton's fun, unique character.

The name Penticton comes from the language of the local Syilx Okanagan Nation—snpinktn, meaning "a place where people have always been all year long," or simply "The Always Place." Because of Penticton's plentiful hunting, fishing and gathering, the Syilx people have always relied on this abundant land to harvest food and medicine throughout the year.

# Un-Ordinary Your Day

Āamatax™, Campbell River, is nestled within the territory of the Liq̓w̓l̓daʷ peoples; the WeWaik̓ai, WeWaik̓um, and Kwik̓l̓ah Nations; here there are no borders between city and nature. Āamatax™, Campbell River is located in the heart of the Discovery Passage, a small city nestled in nature, surrounded by the wild, with all the comforts of home.

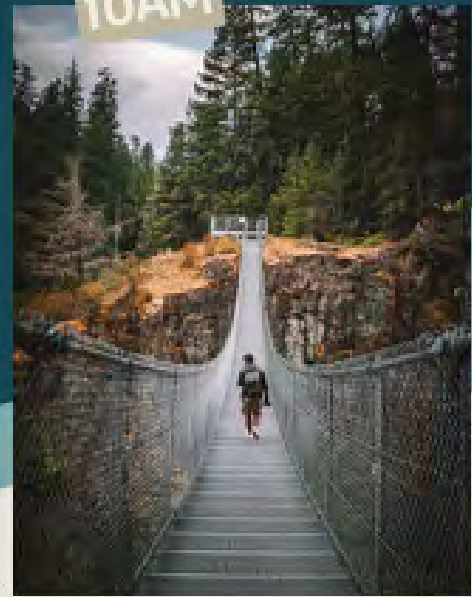
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# PENTICTON

## ➔ THE FLAVOURS OF THE OKANAGAN

The Okanagan region is world-famous for its wines, and you'll find over 80 wineries within a 20-minute drive of Penticton. The Naramata Bench region alone is home to 45 wineries, such as Bench 1775, Elephant Island and JoieFarm. Book a tour with one of the region's many knowledgeable tour operators or create your own tasting itinerary.

Penticton is also home to eight craft breweries, from Abandoned Rail to Yellow Dog. All are family-friendly, and exemplify Penticton's casual, welcoming community vibes.

For an alcohol-free tasting, check out The People's Crafthouse for soda made from natural fruits, flowers, roots and herbs, inspired by recipes of the traditional soda and tonic makers of the 1800s.

With the Okanagan Valley's rich fruit-growing climate, summer is the perfect time to take advantage of the bounty of perfectly ripe produce, from heirloom tomatoes to juicy cherries, peaches and berries, all found at Penticton's farmers' markets, fruit stands or pick-your-own orchards.

Penticton's locally owned cafes and restaurants make good use of this abundance of delicious home-grown food. Savour coffee and breakfast at Wayne & Freda, grab a homemade takeaway lunch from The Bench Market, and have dinner on the lakefront patio at Sociale by Villa Rosa. And for something sweet, try one of the 72 flavours at the famous Tickleberry's Ice Cream Shop.

## ➔ EXPLORE THE CITY

To get a taste of downtown Penticton, take a walk along colourful Front Street and the Lakeshore Drive waterfront, enjoying public art by the BC artists participating in this year's Public Sculpture Exhibition, as well as other permanent art installations throughout the city.



Painted Rock Estate Winery overlooking Skaha Lake.  
Destination BC, Kari Medig

Or, rent an e-bike and take the Lake to Lake Bike Route through the heart of the city. Along the way, you'll find plenty of places to stop for a bite to eat and to check out local arts, culture and history at the Penticton Art Gallery, the Lloyd Gallery and the Penticton Museum & Archives.

## ➔ OUTDOOR PURSUITS

Penticton's vibrant natural surroundings make it easy and irresistible to get outside and have fun.

Between Skaha Lake and Okanagan Lake, there are plenty of oppor-


tunities for adventures on the water. Go for a swim, or rent a kayak or paddleboard, then hop out and relax on the warm sandy beaches.

Penticton is home to many trails and parks, including Skaha Bluffs Provincial Park, a haven for rock climbing, hiking and mountain biking. The Kettle Valley Rail Trail, which travels 650 kilometres across BC along a decommissioned railroad system, has hiking and biking routes for all ages and abilities, with gorgeous views of the lakes, mountains, orchards and vineyards along the Naramata Bench.



Its spectacular natural landscape is ripe for outdoor adventures of all kinds, and its lush agricultural climate makes it a paradise for local food and wine enthusiasts.

Finally, a summer rite of passage for Penticton visitors is to do the famous Channel Float. Start your journey at Coyote Cruises, where you can rent a big rubber floatie (or bring your own), hop in and let the lazy river carry you down to Skaha Lake. The float takes three to four hours, with a stopping point midway where you can grab a bite to eat or hop out if you don't want to float the whole channel.

For more information and inspiration for your Penticton adventure, including itineraries for self-guided food and wine tours, go to visit-penticton.ca. 

# PCA ups service

## Kelowna-Comox & Vancouver-Penticton

**P**acific Coastal Airlines (PCA) is proud to announce the launch of a new route between Kelowna and Comox, as well as the expansion of its flight services between Vancouver and Penticton this spring and summer.

Operating Sunday to Friday, the new Kelowna-Comox service will be introduced this summer, with its inaugural flight scheduled for June 25. The new route will be serviced by reliable Beechcraft 1900 aircraft, ensuring passengers enjoy a comfortable and efficient travel experience.

From April 28 to June 22, travellers can enjoy increased connectivity between Vancouver and Penticton, with two daily flights operated by the reliable Saab 340B aircraft, accommodating up to 34 passengers. These additional flights will

offer guests seamless travel options throughout the week, facilitating convenient connections to and from various destinations such as Victoria, Williams Lake and Tofino, among others.

Between June 23 and September 7, PCA will further expand this service to three flights on Sundays, Mondays, Fridays and select Wednesdays, as well as maintain two flights on Tuesdays and Thursdays, all operated by the Saab 340B aircraft. Additionally, a Saturday service will be provided using the Beechcraft 1900, accommodating up to 19 passengers. This increased frequency of flights, offering up to 1,126 return seats each week, underscores PCA's dedication to providing travellers with convenience and flexibility. 





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# There's hope in the air

## PCA strengthens partnership with Hope Air

**P**acific Coastal Airlines (PCA) is pleased to reaffirm its commitment to the continuing partnership with Hope Air, an organization dedicated to facilitating complimentary air travel for families and individuals in need of long-distance transportation to access critical medical care.

Hope Air—recognized as the only national charity providing free flights, accommodations and travel support for Canadians in financial need and facing health-related challenges—operates with a clear and impactful mission. Their services are intentionally barrier-free, ensuring accessibility for patients in small, rural communities requiring medical travel assistance far from home.

Each year, Hope Air extends support to 3,000 patients across 560-plus communities in Canada. Their comprehen-

sive assistance encompasses flights, accommodations, meals and rides, alleviating the logistical and financial burdens that patients may encounter during their medical journeys.

This partnership is instrumental in providing direct access to medical care, addressing challenges that patients might otherwise confront, such as potential appointment postponements or cancellations, enduring lengthy journeys of up to 16 hours each way, or accumulating overwhelming personal debt to secure necessary health care.

Over the past 17 years, PCA has generously provided Hope Air clients with over 7,000 flights, further solidifying its commitment to improving health care access for those in need.

"In a vast province such as British Columbia, access to health care is often difficult and full of barriers," says

Stephanie Aldridge, executive director of Hope Air British Columbia. "The ability of Hope Air to support people at one of the most vulnerable times of their lives is made possible through the strength of our relationships with our corporate partners. We are tremendously grateful to Pacific Coastal Airlines for their commitment and generosity to Hope Air patients over the past 17 years."

"We are proud to stand beside Hope Air in their mission to make health care accessible to those facing geographical and financial barriers," says Johnathan Richardson, PCA's VP of Customer and Commercial. "Our commitment to this partnership aligns with our values of community engagement and social responsibility, and we are dedicated to supporting Hope Air's impactful mission." 🇨🇦



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# Keepers of the Land

Images from the making of a hopeful new documentary

Intro by Kim Gray

Photo captions by Deirdre Leowinata

I've often heard people refer to the remote west coast of Canada as our country's "Galapagos."

Now that I've travelled here, I can tell you with certainty why this is, and why a visit to the wildlife-rich region can leave you gobsmacked.

I certainly was a few years back when I visited Spirit Bear Lodge, owned by the Kitasoo Xai'xais First Nation, located in Klemtu on BC's central coast, and accessed via Pacific Coastal Airline's destination at Bella Bella.

Lodge guides, while generously sharing their culture, introduced me and fellow guests to wildlife, both by foot in lush, ancient forests (where we observed a spirit bear splashing and fishing in a waterfall) and by boat on the ocean (where we had an intimate encounter with a giant humpback whale).

For most people, experiences like this in the natural world are rare. When they do happen, though, individuals are changed by the knowledge

that a world so remarkable exists at all. They're also left wondering about what's being done to protect this world into the future.

Enter *Keepers of the Land*, a new, multiple-award-winning documentary co-produced by the Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority and Moonfish Media.

Film visionary Douglas Neasloss, also the elected chief of the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation, says he dreamed about making a film like *Keepers of the Land* for "a long, long time."

His goal with the documentary is to promote his nation's approach to stewardship.

"I wanted to highlight what our little community has done. We punch way above our weight," says Neasloss, whose Xai'xais name is Muq'vas Glaw, which means "White Bear."

"I also wanted to highlight the underwater world. The marine environment, which we've taken measures to protect, is very important to us. We're

an ocean people. We depend on the ocean for food and transportation," he says.

"Finally, I wanted a film that highlighted the elders talking about our stewardship responsibilities, something future generations would be able to watch. Now, here they are, captured forever."

During the pandemic, Neasloss connected with Moonfish Media's Deirdre Leowinata and Tavish Campbell about bringing his dream to life in a cinematic way. The pair jumped at the opportunity for a number of reasons, including Moonfish Media's focus on environmental justice.

"This film is about a nation on the remote central coast of BC coming into its power and taking control of its resources after 150 years of oppression and trauma," says Leowinata. "The conservation policy that the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation is driving offers solutions that are missing in the conservation world. These are solutions that I





1. Klemtu, home to the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation, is a small community of 350 people located on Swindle Island off the central coast of British Columbia in the Great Bear Rainforest. Documentary *Keepers of the Land* features the community's impressive efforts to steward their territory for future generations. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)
2. Kitasoo Xai'xais field technician Vernon Brown looks up at a towering red cedar. The nation, which is taking the management and protection of its territory into its own hands, is conducting close to 30 research and monitoring programs involving everything from trees and wildlife to language and blue

carbon. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)

3. White plumose anemones, red and green urchins, scallops and multi-coloured sponges decorate a boulder topped with kelp in Kitasoo Xai'xais territory. The waters of the BC coast are some of the richest in the world, hosting an explosive diversity of marine life. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)
4. A black bear and its white cousin, the spirit bear, sit by a waterfall in Kitasoo Xai'xais territory searching for returning salmon in a raging river after early fall rains. The white fur of a spirit bear is the result of a recessive colour gene in black bears found exclusively in a small

region of the BC coast, making the spirit bear one of the rarest bears in the world. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)

5. Silver, ocean-phase sockeye salmon collect at the mouth of a river in Kitasoo Xai'xais territory on their return home to spawn. The ecosystems and inhabitants of the Pacific Northwest are heavily reliant on the return of this iconic fish for food. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)
6. Humpback whales along BC's west coast have made a comeback in the last 30 years given the efforts of individuals and non-governmental groups and new government policies. (Photo: Moonfish Media)



7



want to help uplift."

Meanwhile, the spectacularly beautiful short documentary—a re-assuring and inspiring film in countless ways—continues to win accolades at film festivals everywhere.

"It's been cool to see us

alongside big hitters like National Geographic and the BBC. Our little community!" says Neasloss. "I hope that people around the world will watch *Keepers of the Land* and see that Indigenous communities like ours can get the job done. We're not talking about the work. We're actually doing it." 🏠

8



9



10



**7.** A Pacific herring looks out at the rest of his spawning school from within a bed of fucus seaweed. The herring spawn is the first major natural history event of the year, infusing the entire BC coast with an important and abundant source of food for a multitude of species after a long winter. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)

**8.** The waters of Gitdisdzu Lugeyks (Kitasu Bay) swirl with a milky blue colour during the herring spawn. In 2022, the

Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation declared the bay a marine protected area. On April 17, 2024, the area was announced by the Marine Conservation Institute in Athens, Greece as Canada's first "Blue Park"—a globally recognized example of outstanding marine protection. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)

**9.** A spirit bear holds tight as he feasts on a pink salmon. The fall salmon run is a critical part of the spirit bear's diet

before the animal's long winter hibernation. (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)

**10.** Hereditary chief Ernest "Charlie" Mason Jr.—a central character in the documentary *Keepers of the Land*—pilots his herring skiff during the harvest. One of Chief Mason's hereditary chief names is Nismuutk, meaning "a person who helps, a person who gives." (Photo: Moonfish Media/Kitasoo Xai'xais Stewardship Authority)





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# Whale of a time



## Vancouver Island whale watching companies offer exciting excursions and maintain environmental commitments

*Story contributed*

**W**hale watching in BC starts as early as March, when 22,000 Pacific grey whales arrive along the west coast of Vancouver Island, headed for their summer feeding grounds in the Bering Sea. The journey—spanning 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles)—marks the longest migration route of any animal.

In summer, orcas can be seen from the waters around Vancouver and Victoria, with an estimated 86 individuals residing between the mainland and Vancouver Island. And in May and October, wildlife enthusiasts can glimpse humpback and minke whales in the waters near Prince Rupert and northern Vancouver Island.

These sustainably minded tour op-

erators can help you see local whales in spring and summer—all while supporting ocean conservation and protecting marine habitats.

Keep your camera close!

### **🦋 OCEAN OUTFITTERS, TOFINO**

Hop aboard an inflatable zodiac and zip through the pristine, uninhabited wilderness surrounding the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Along with humpback whales and grey whales, species on show include sea lions, porpoises and sea otters.

Conservation commitment: Ocean Outfitters is actively involved in efforts to protect wildlife living in Clayoquot Sound's temperate rainforest ecosystem, with the majority of trip fees going toward projects that improve

wildlife welfare, advocate for changes to legislative policy, promote education and research and champion carbon action.

### **🦋 COASTAL RAINFOREST SAFARIS, PORT HARDY**

Cruise through the territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw people, where humpback whales, orcas and other marine mammals frolic in waters surrounded by fragrant cedar forest.

Conservation commitment: Coastal Rainforest Safaris is a member of the North Island Marine Mammal Stewardship Association, which means abiding by a code of conduct, conducting marine mammal research and conservation, and providing responsible wildlife viewing experiences.



### 🦋 PRINCE OF WHALES, VICTORIA, VANCOUVER AND TELEGRAPH COVE

With sighting success rates over 95 per cent, Prince of Whales takes guests to whale hot spots like the protected waters of Johnstone Strait and the southern Gulf and San Juan islands, where orcas and humpbacks often roam.

Conservation commitment: In addition to adopting orcas from the Vancouver Aquarium—with fees supporting research and conservation of the southern resident orcas and other marine life—Prince of Whales shares data with the BC Cetacean Sightings Network, is a founding member of the Pacific Whale Watch Association, and holds membership with the collective-action group 1% for the Planet.

### 🦋 OCEAN ECOVENTURES, COWICHAN BAY AND PARKSVILLE

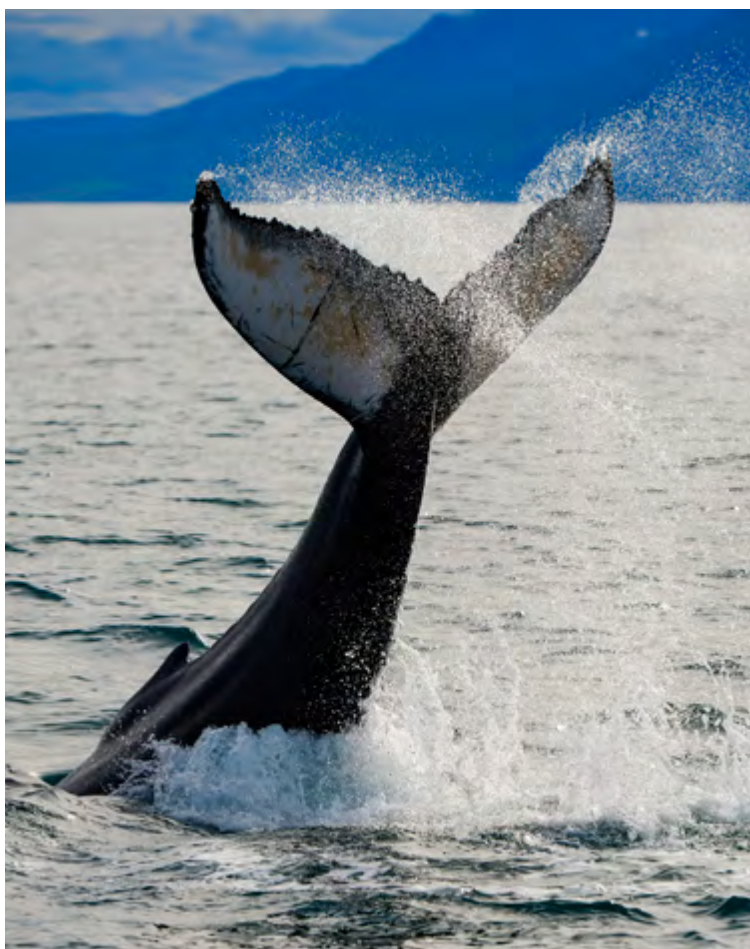
Set sail on a half- or full-day whale-watching excursion, where you can spot transient orcas, humpbacks, grey whales and minkes. The company boasts the highest sightings of orcas and humpbacks on Vancouver Island.

Conservation commitment: Ocean Ecoventures is a member of 1% for the Planet, donates annually to non-profits supporting whale and wildlife conservation efforts, and operates vessels with the quietest sound footprint in the industry. The company also partners with Bullfrog Power to reduce its carbon footprint, and uses recycled or biodegradable products throughout its operations.

### 🦋 VANCOUVER ISLAND WHALE WATCH, NA- NAIMO

Clamber onto an open zodiac-style boat or a semi-covered vessel for a trip through the Salish Sea ecosystem to see orcas and humpbacks, along with sea lions, porpoises, seals and other marine wildlife. The tours are guided by marine naturalists with an academic background in marine biology—many of whom are also whale researchers.

Conservation commitment: Vancouver Island Whale Watch is BC's first whale-watching company to take visitors exclusively to healthy growing populations of whales, avoiding the endangered southern resident orca population. The company also donates \$2 from each seat sold to local marine conservation initiatives and offers research-based tours whose proceeds are donated directly to marine conservation. Plus, it collects data on every whale-watching trip, and provides its findings to the Center for Whale Research, BC Cetacean Sightings Network and Keta Coastal Conservation. 🦋



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# Elevating health care to new heights

## The skyward mission of the KGH Foundation

**J**ust as a skilled pilot and crew rely on a well-maintained aircraft and robust support systems to navigate the skies, the Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) Foundation depends on the support of the community to help drive its vision to advance world-class health care, close to home.

Every day in communities across the southern interior of British Columbia, the lives of thousands of people and their families are impacted by the need for urgent or specialized medical care at KGH. Illness, injury, premature birth or end of life are all part of the collective human experience, and yet when they arrive, everything changes in a heartbeat.

In these moments, access to world-class, state-of-the-art medical facilities and the highest quality patient care can be the difference.

KGH is one of two tertiary care facili-

ties and the main referral hospital for up to 1 million people living in the interior of BC. It is one of the largest hospitals in Western Canada with more than 450 beds. And at any given time, one out of every four beds in the hospital is occupied by someone outside of the Central Okanagan.


In BC, Kelowna General is the only hospital outside the Lower Mainland or Vancouver Island that performs angioplasty or cardiac surgery. KGH provides neonatal intensive care for infants at 30 weeks, is home to one of the most advanced, hybrid operating suites in the country and is the region's only hospital providing acute care for youth mental health patients. KGH is also home to the UBC Faculty of Medicine's Southern Medical Program.

The KGH Foundation's mission is rooted in the belief that access to excellence

in health care should not be limited to metropolitan hubs like Vancouver or Calgary. The vibrant communities in the southern interior of BC deserve a world-class hospital and world-class health care. The KGH Foundation is committed to helping ensure that every resident has access to the highest standard of health care close to home.

The foundation works with a generous community to raise funds to support world-class health care, close to home, for a growing and diverse population. It is the lead fundraising organization for KGH and its associated facilities, JoeAnna's House and the Central Okanagan Hospice House.

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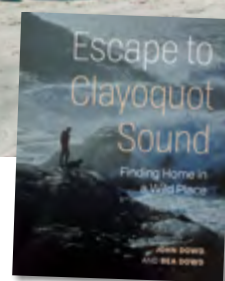
# Clayoquot memories



## Escape to Clayoquot Sound: Finding Home in a Wild Place

All photographs courtesy of John and Bea Dowd, unless noted.

Twenty years ago, two empty-nesters with a love of the outdoors stumbled upon a vacant beach house on Vargas Island in Clayoquot Sound. It was part of an off-grid, 10-acre stretch nestled within a provincial park reserve. *Escape to Clayoquot Sound: Finding Home in a Wild Place* is an affectionate retrospective chronicling the decade John and Bea Dowd spent as year-round caretakers of the property. Following is an excerpt:



Excerpt from ***Escape to Clayoquot Sound: Finding Home in a Wild Place*** by John Dowd and Bea Dowd.

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In the spring of 2010, we had a strange salvage encounter that brought cash and levity. Alain, a wildlife photographer and long-time friend, was visiting from France and we had set off on the morning beach walk.

To our astonishment, a large black barge had washed ashore at the north end, right near the rocks. It was about the size of an average house, a rusty, mussel-encrusted monster of heavy planks built on two large steel pontoons, each tapered at both ends like a gigantic river catamaran. At one end, a couple of box structures and a fuel drum gave it the appearance of a submarine from a distance. Against the grandeur of Catface Mountain, its presence was an offence.

We had heard about it on the news during the night but thought nothing more of it until there it was. Coast Guard radio described it as a barge for helicopter logging. It had broken free

from a tug on its way from Winter Harbour to Ucluelet and was considered a hazard to navigation.

"It looks expensive," Alain said as we drew closer.

"Lucky it came ashore on clear sand. It would have been destroyed on the rocks."

"Might be salvage," Alain said.

Bea had been out taking photos in the early morning light, and caught up with us, clicking away.

"What an ugly beast," she said. "We'd better call the Coast Guard and let them know it's here." By "we" she meant me.

I went to the point for cell service and called the Coast Guard, and then the RCMP, and BC Parks for good measure.

As I was returning, a seaplane swooped low over the trees and circled tightly, faces pressed against the windows.

"We should get an anchor from the

boat shed," I said. "If we are going to claim salvage, we need to have a line attached to this thing."

Alain and I trotted back to the house leaving Bea to guard the prize.

We set the first anchor with its attendant buoy out as far into the surf zone as we could reach without swimming, then returned for a second, larger one to set at an angle up the beach in case the increasing surf knocked the barge sideways onto the rocks before we could tow it out to sea. When we got back to the barge with our wheelbarrow full of rope and the second anchor (itself the subject of a prior salvage), a small white runabout was hovering off the surf zone facing off with Beatrice, who stood defiantly at the water's edge pointing at herself, then the barge, and mouthing, "Mine!"

"They tried to grab our buoy," she said.

As we watched, the boat, with three men aboard, made another attempt to



scoop up the float in what by now was a hefty surf break and building with the rising tide. One of the men lunged for the float with a boat hook and was almost thrown into the water as a breaker smacked into the side, bringing the boat close to capsize.

They barely escaped being swept ashore and managed to scuttle for open water, where they waited.

"That is our barge," one man yelled.

"It is salvage," I replied.

"There is a tug with a 5,000-pound pull on its way," he yelled.

"Great," I yelled back.

The tug was one of the powerful aluminum workboats that pulled barges to fish farms. It had a crew of two and came alongside the white fishboat where the crews held an impromptu conference as they tried to decide what to do about the fierce grey-haired lady with the camera on the beach. I, meanwhile, returned to the boathouse and launched the inflatable.

The tide was halfway up the beach by the time I joined the other two boats beyond the surf line.

"You can't claim that as salvage!" the

tugboat skipper, a crusty, bleary-eyed old fellow yelled across the water to me. He'd been up all night looking for the barge he'd lost and was very grumpy.

"I have," I said.

"I'll call the police."

"I did already, and Coast Guard and Parks too. They seemed real worried about oil spills."

"Oh man, this is going to be messy," the grumpy one said.

He spoke briefly to a well-dressed man who had appeared from below and was standing back listening.

"Okay, I'll tell you what. I'll pay you 500 bucks cash to take our line ashore and make it fast to the barge."

I considered the offer for about half a second. I certainly did not want their junky old barge. For us, it was a game. For them, it was a big worry.

"Deal," I said. "But your guy must be the one to attach the line."

"No problem."

The skipper collected the cash from among the crew and passed it over. A seaman climbed into my boat and we ran a light line through the

surf to shore. He then pulled a heavy nylon hawser from the tug and made it fast to the barge, which was by then partially afloat. Tension came on the line and the sea astern the tug frothed and seethed.

**Bang!**

I was glad their man ran with the hawser because the strut he attached it to gave way with a sound like a rifle shot and was catapulted into the sea. The line was retrieved, reattached, and power applied once again. This time it held. Slowly the barge moved and broke free. Out through the surf and on her way she went.

Alain was, as well as a photographer, a retired colonel in an elite navy unit. As we walked back to the house I asked, "Alain, was that salvage, or was it piracy?"

He gave a Gallic shrug, said "Bof," and smiled.

(I ran into the tug skipper at the boat show a year or two later and told him we'd donated the money to the Friends of Clayoquot Sound for their No Logging campaign. He laughed.) 🇨🇦



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