

# INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

APRIL 2023

AUTHOR  
MICHAEL  
KLUCKNER

GATEWAY TO  
GANANOQUE

SWEET, SWEET  
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### Cover MICHAEL KLUCKNER

An artist, an author and an urban critic whose creative expression makes one thing clear: he deeply loves Vancouver.

Photo: Tom Gould

**INSPIRED**  
55+ lifestyle magazine

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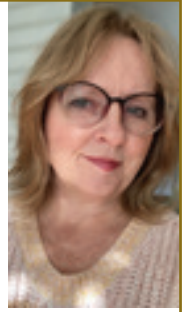
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## THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



Three years ago, I was forced to make the difficult decision to close the magazine for two months. As Covid-19 cases escalated and government restrictions increased to meet the pandemic tsunami, it was a terrifying time as businesses contemplated their futures without customers, and citizens withdrew to the safety of their homes.

We had no idea how things would turn out. We learned to live in the unknown, taking one day at a time, hoping for a speedy end to the virus that was tearing the world and families apart, and causing the death of people we knew and loved.

It feels a little surreal to realize that three years have gone by. With an abundance of changes and the support of government subsidies and partnering industries, I found a way to keep publishing and keep paying the bills. *INSPIRED Magazine* survived and continues to find its way into the homes of thousands of people across Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland of BC, and beyond.

I'm grateful for the loyalty and support of our advertisers, readers and staff. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Things aren't completely back to the way they were and it's possible they never will be.

It requires the courage to seek a different path, allowing what doesn't work anymore to be abandoned with gratitude for its service, while we look ahead with anticipation for new opportunities and options.

Regret is seldom a helpful emotion. It keeps us looking in the rearview mirror.

Instead, our vision should be focused on what lies ahead.

Like when driving a car, it's okay to occasionally check the side and rear mirrors for blind spots, because that information can occasionally be helpful to prevent an accident, but it's never a good idea to ignore our view of the road in front of us.

Many of us are reluctant to step on the gas and speed into the future, and that caution is justified after what we've just been through. If we've learned anything these past three years, it is to slow down and savour the small moments, to treasure precious relationships, and to engage in self-care and loving ourselves.

So, as we head into the spring, I'm going to take some time to consider which things in my life bring me the most joy and satisfaction. I'm going to be looking for experiences and processes that bring calm, ease, flow and well-being into my life.

In this month's magazine, we feature travel within Canada. Our writers take us to some little-known places within the borders of our country that pack a big wallop. One of the upsides of the pandemic was that more of us took the time to explore places closer to home, and to our delight, discovered many wonderful destinations that are no more than a short car or plane ride away.

So, here's to celebrating a future of new and exciting adventures, of cultivating meaningful relationships with people, places and things, always mindful that we are our own best guide and friend.

Happy April! |

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# Benefits of Walk-in Tubs

As we age and begin to lose our mobility and sense of balance, bathing can not only become difficult but also a cause of additional stress and anxiety.

Fear of falling and a fear of not being able to get out of the tub are two of the most common occurrences with many of our seniors today. Walk-in tubs have become extremely popular in the last decade and estimates show that people who go ahead and install a walk-in tub in their homes today, will be able to live independently for an additional five years.

Walk-in tubs are exactly what the name implies, tubs that have large doors that open, and you simply walk in and sit down on a 17-inch-high seat. You close and lock the door and the tub fills rapidly while you are sitting comfortably and safely inside. All the taps and controls are easily accessible at your fingertips. Once you are done your bath, turn the dial and the tub quickly drains and you simply open the door and walk out of the tub. The various models all have numerous grab bars and non-slip surfaces making getting in and out worry free. Walk-in tubs are designed for an aging population who desire to remain independent for many years to come.

Manufacturers have optional tub designs accommodating every shape and size of person and bathroom. There is a tub size that will fit in the space where your existing tub or shower is. Walk-in tubs can be as basic as a soaker tub to as deluxe as your own personal spa. Offering numerous options such as heated back, multispeed warm air jets, water jets, ozone, light therapy, aromatherapy, and more.

The benefits of a walk-in tub are numerous. Many people crave being able to confidently have a bath again and find relief by just soaking in a warm tub. Owners say they believe they sleep better after a soothing bath. The warm air or water jets give a deep massage and help to stimulate circulation, thus carrying additional healing oxygen throughout the body to the hands and feet. This has shown positive results increasing mobility and helping to relieve the pain and symptoms of such conditions as arthritis, chronic back

pain, fibromyalgia, diabetic and peripheral neuropathy, as well as various other acute and chronic conditions.

The Canadian Government website states that 1 in 4 seniors fall every year, and 25% of these falls are serious, leaving the victims permanently disabled and bedridden. A large percentage of these falls take place in the bathroom.



Aside from all the pain and suffering it also ends up costing the Canadian medical system two billion dollars annually. Therefore, the British Columbia and Federal Governments are helping many people who decide to purchase a walk-in tub now. The help comes in the forms of a tax credit, a Provincial Sales Tax waiver, and in certain qualifying cases a \$7,500.00 Government Grant.

As we all age and the years fly by, many seniors are faced with the reality that taking proactive steps today and deciding to retrofit their homes with a walk-in tub is one of the best investments they can make to help them age in place, comfortably and independently in the home they love.

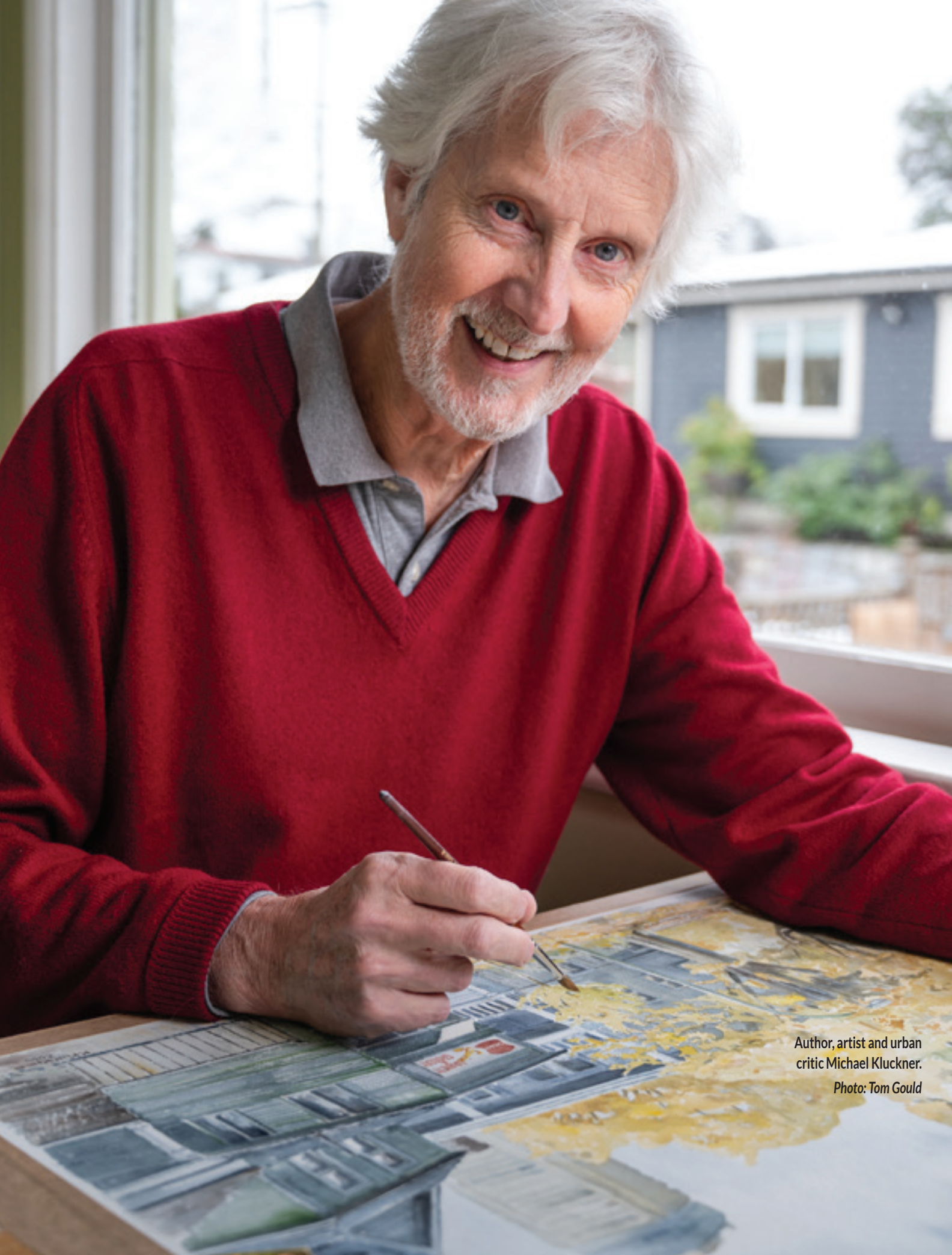
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Author, artist and urban  
critic Michael Kluckner.

Photo: Tom Gould

# MICHAEL KLUCKNER: VANCOUVER'S CULTURAL GEOGRAPHER

by JOHN THOMSON

The music was pumping, and the wine was flowing at Vancouver's Petly Jones Gallery last summer for the launch of Michael Kluckner's new graphic novel *The Rooming House*. The Youngbloods, Steppenwolf, David Bowie and other boomer favourites were just the ticket to set the mood.

Michael's ode to hippy Vancouver in the 1970s focuses on the lives and exploits of eight twenty-somethings who meet at a mid-town rooming house while the city undergoes profound cultural and political change. Remember Mayor Tom Campbell, aka "Tom Terrific," anyone? In addition to writing the story, Michael also populated it with over 130 black-and-white illustrations.

Michael is arguably Vancouver's most popular urban critic, the author of 22 books and graphic novels, many of them dealing with the changing face of the city. Earlier titles, such as *Vancouver Vanishes*, *Vanishing Vancouver* or *Vanishing Vancouver: The Last 25 Years* come to mind. The word vanishing comes up a lot. And why not? That's what interests him.

For the past 40 years, Michael has methodically documented Vancouver's missing landmarks in text and watercolour. He's written other books, of course, everything from husbandry (*Wise Acres*), to biography (*Julia*) but Michael's favourite subject remains Vancouver and its distinctive neighbourhoods.

Not bad for a local kid who taught himself to write, paint and draw. The prolific painter never went to art school, preferring to audit open courses in architecture and art history at UBC. As for drawing, he says he learned to draw by reading *Mad* magazine and copying the artwork of cartoonist Mort Drucker. He intended to become an architect but ended up with a degree in mathematics and left university, as he says, "adrift and disillusioned."

"The world is a safer place for the fact I abandoned architecture as a career path," he laughs. "I would have been open to all kinds of things but there was no direct profession staring me in the face. I worked on a salmon boat off Ucluelet, I went to Banff and worked in a restaurant, I travelled and began to drift into writing articles and then doing drawings for the alternative newspapers that were around." Many elements in *The Rooming House* such as driving south to Berkeley in a camper van and working in Banff are inspired by Michael's travels.

"We were young and sneering and cynical and sarcastic,

you know, all that kind of stuff pretty typical of young people. If I read any of the stuff I wrote at that point I think, 'Oh God, did I really say that sort of thing?'"

But he kept at it, including writing segments about local history for the neighbourhood newspaper *Around Kitsilano*. Increasingly curious about the streetscape and the houses he saw in his travels, he also wrote a student orientation guide for a book he was producing for BCIT. In 1981, he turned that guide into a self-published book for the public which, in turn, led to a weekly walk-and-talk segment for a local television show.

He suddenly had the stature, the audience and the makings of a crowd pleaser but how to illustrate it? Cartoons wouldn't cut it, so he taught himself a new medium.

"The light on the west coast seems to lend itself very well to watercolour," he says. "It just seemed appropriate."

Watercolour is an unforgiving medium. You can't make a mistake and cover it up, and it dries very quickly.

"You've got to do all your thinking before you start," he says, "then it becomes quite easy."

Michael admits it took a while to get the hang of it. "I'd look at my work and I'd say 'okay, I can see what's wrong with it' and then I would do it again and get a little bit better each time. Like in the old joke 'How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice.'"

Practice paid off. His watercolours are warm and inviting and representative of his fleeting subject matter. They resonate with his readers and have become synonymous with the Kluckner brand.

Armed with text and illustrations, he pitched his neighbourhood book proposal to publisher Harper Collins. They passed on it but introduced him to another company, which published *Vancouver: The Way it Was*. That was in 1984. It sold 5,000 copies in 10 weeks, making it a bestseller in Canada.

"That thing went through five printings and really launched me as being the person who wrote these history books on Vancouver," he says.

Whether it's a road trip through the BC Interior (*Here and Now*), documenting the city's past (*Vancouver: The Way it Was*), or a speculative memoir like *The Rooming House*, a sense of place and its effect on people is a constant theme

# Snapshot

with Michael Kluckner

If you were to meet your 20-year-old self, what advice would you give him?

*"Don't think that you can wait around for some golden age in your life when you can do the things that you've put off doing. Just keep going."*

Who or what has influenced you the most and why?

*"The old joke, I chose my parents well. I was 18 when my mother died and the influence from her was 'don't wait to do what you want to do.' My father was an interesting character. He gave me some good values about planning ahead and all that. Their values were very influential."*

What are you grateful for?

*"Through all the ups and downs of art and books and experiments and all the rest of it, there's been my wife, Christine. It's like my character, Justin, in The Rooming House. He figures out that maybe a friend makes the best partner after all."*

What does success mean to you?

*"A kind of recognition I suppose. An appreciation by other people of the things I've done. I always wanted to work alone, and I wanted to emerge to the adulation of the crowds – I got one out of two. (He laughs) That's success, in a way."*



in Michael's stories. He follows the writer's dictum, write what you know.

"I create a kind of a geography in my mind. For instance, in the city where I live or the city I travel to, I always try to get that sense of where the different places are and how they relate rather than oh, here's a history, you know, how the place was created."

"It's really all autobiographical in a way. We go to the farm," he says referring to a property he and his wife bought outside Vancouver in 1993. "We really have no farming background and all of a sudden, we have chickens and sheep and lambs being born. I'm immersing myself in that and as I'm doing that, I'm illustrating my own life. That's what really motivates me. I keep coming back to this thing, what is my life?"

It's a technique he returns to time and again.

"I take my memories and my experiences, mash them all up together, create characters out of that and then illustrate what those characters are doing. That's my modus operandi. It's an inside out way of telling history. Anybody who is classically trained as a historian would say 'well, this is just a bunch of anecdotes and what I want is the big principles.' Well, the big principles are in there but you're getting them kind of backwards. One story leads to another. I

think if I had taken a completely different path in my life, I would never have been a historian. I might have been a cultural geographer."

Atmospheric and nostalgic, his Vancouver books are deceptively critical. As the founding president of the Heritage Vancouver Society (1991) and later as a BC board member on the Heritage Canada Foundation (1998–2000), it should come as no surprise that Michael is critical of rampant, unbridled development and favours conservation.

"[Vancouver] is more of a generic city, the distinctiveness of its neighbourhoods is being eroded. We ought to do more," he says. "We are a society addicted to newness, to throwing things away. I also think that cities should have a memory. Vancouver is a city that is constantly clearcutting itself. I don't believe it can ever develop the richness, the maturity of a real city as it's constantly erasing and replacing its neighbourhoods. The poetry is seeping away from my Vancouver."

He agrees people may have seen him as an advocate and his books a call to action, but he follows a different path today – aware that "most people prefer nuance to propaganda."

"If someone asks my opinion, I'll give it, but I'm not leading any campaign. I'm not involved in anything like that. My advocacy now is for understanding the city's history, which is a more neutral thing than heritage."





As the President of the Vancouver Historical Society, Michael helps organize field trips and monthly lectures on local history at the Vancouver Museum.

His artwork has also undergone an evolution of sorts. In 2000, he turned to a darker medium, more in keeping with the gritty graphic novels he was writing.

“I can’t paint homeless people in watercolour, I just can’t do it,” he says about the delicate nature of the medium. His later stories involving voting rights, discrimination and class struggles suggested a different approach. Spurred by his interest in Japanese art, he turned to brush and ink, and his resulting black-and-white paintings are rough, stark, and look like woodblock prints, requiring the reader to fill in the blanks.

“I like the way space is defined by shadows,” he says, “and by how much you can leave out in a drawing. You really need your brain to put the thing together.”

This is especially true in *The Rooming House*.

Today, Michael and his wife, Christine Allen, live in an older neighbourhood in an older house, which they’ve tinkered with over the years. A fix-up here, a fix-up there. They met when they were both working at *Kitsilano Today* decades ago, went their separate ways and re-united years later.

“Christine had studied English, had a more serious mindset and became my editor when I began to write seriously,” he says. “She would just say no, no, no,” he laughs.

Christine no longer says “no.”

“Over the years, Michael’s skills as a writer have far outstripped my skills as an editor,” she says.

Also a writer, Christine is the author of *A Year at Killara Farm*, an account of their 13-year foray into farm life as well as three books on gardening, *Roses for the Pacific Northwest*, *Gardens of Vancouver*, and *Climbing Up: Climbing Plants for the Pacific Northwest*. Michael says she’s built beautiful gardens front and back with a vegetable patch at the rear, especially for him, a vestige of life on the Killara farm.

With two writers under the same roof, you’d expect creative tensions to

develop, but Michael says it’s not that way at all.

“My writing and my subjects are very different from her subjects, so we’re very supportive of one another,” he says.

His new commission, for instance, *The Bund: A Graphic History of Jewish Labour Resistance* documents a movement founded 100 years ago to unite all Jewish workers in the pursuit of a democratic and socialist Russia. Michael contributed over a hundred black-and-white illustrations, which he washed in a light overlay of sepias, umbers and yellow ochre. Written by a San Francisco author, the book is scheduled for release later this year.

“I’ve never drawn Lenin before,” says Michael. “I must have drawn him five times.” Drawing Lenin and others kept him busy last August through December.

He insists he and Christine are just normal folks living a normal life, involved with the community, travelling and visiting their grandchildren. Christine’s daughter from an earlier marriage lives in Australia.

“We’re just sort of creaking into old age,” he maintains. And yet he can’t ignore the call. He’s planning another Vancouver book to coincide with the 40th anniversary of *Vancouver: The Way it Was*, the book that started the ball rolling so many years ago. He’s calling it *Surviving Vancouver* and says it will “stake out an attitude about coping in a city that is changing as rapidly as Vancouver.”

“I just drive myself forward,” he says of his need to document the world around him. “Art in theory is about communication, and my way of making a connection with people has been through my art and my writing. I’m not an artist in the sense of somebody who’s interested in the abstract issue of art,” he continues, “it’s really about the world around me and what I’m seeing and experiencing that ends up being my work.”

Is this obsession with a sense of place and its impact a way to find himself?

“Yeah, yeah, I think so,” he concludes. |






In case you missed us at the 55+ Lifestyle Show, here are a few of our 2023 Maple Leaf Collection adventures!




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# CHARLEVOIX AND THE NEW CLUB MED

by BRUCE SACH

Venturing out to the Club Med Charlevoix, northeast of Québec City, is akin to visiting a new country.

The vistas looking upstream over the St. Lawrence River are enticing and maddeningly unfamiliar. The mysterious-looking Isle-aux-Coudres is a distant view that is possibly unlike anything you thought existed in Canada.

And indoors, you'll have a chance, should you choose, to practice your Spanish, yes, Spanish, as a high percentage of staff at the Club Med are from Mexico! And your French, bien sûr. After all, Le Club Med is a European invention, and we are in Québec.

The mood of the St. Lawrence river is changing constantly, and you may encounter deep fog, sunny skies and everything in between on any given day.

My most vivid memory of the area was a sudden snow squall over the St. Lawrence on an otherwise clear, sunny day.

The beautiful vistas, quaint towns to die for, fresh air and peaceful farmland have been attracting visitors and artists here for centuries. René Richard, A.Y. Jackson and Frank Lismer come immediately to mind, as do somewhat more recent out-of-province and out-of-country landscape artists like Humberto Pinochet, Juan Cristobal and Vladimir Horik.

The views from the Club Med would inspire even the non-artistic. Rooms on the 'river view' side of the lodge offer outstanding views upstream the St. Lawrence, as it slowly widens into the St. Lawrence Gulf and then the Atlantic Ocean. Three out of four seasons, huge cargo ships can be seen chugging along, on their way to and from Montréal.

The enchanting-looking Isle-aux-Coudres, an inhabited island looks achingly near, yet is quite a distance overland. If you have a car, (with good brakes), I recommend visiting it.

You have to drive to Les Éboulements, and then descend an incredibly steep road to Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, known for its paper-making workshop and Maritime Museum. From there, you take a regular ferry to Isle-aux-Coudres. This island has been inhabited for centuries and is a real trip back in time. And don't forget to time your arrival for the ferry trips!

Whether you decide to explore Charlevoix or not, back at the Club Med, I would highly recommend taking in a spa treatment or paying the day fee to enjoy the Spa Ritual. The Spa consists of a huge, indoor dry Finnish sauna, with eternal views of the entire Charlevoix landscape. There are hot and cold tubs outside on a private terrace, completing the Nordic spa 'ritual' so popular across Québec. Access to the Hamman (wet sauna or steam room) is available for all visitors and next to the huge indoor swimming pool. Our spa treatment, given by two ladies from Mexico was exceptional. My wife said it best, "I never wanted it to end!" Afterwards, relax in a comfy, and soundless room, all within a few steps of the hot and cold tubs and dry Finnish spa.

ABOVE | Nestled at the foot of Le Massif ski area, the Charlevoix Club Med offers outstanding upstream views of the St. Lawrence River.

TOC | Club Med Spa Photos: Courtesy of Club Med

Since it's a Club Med, all meals and drinks are included, and there is even a wine/liquor store where you can taste wines and then, if you chose, have them served to you in one of the three restaurants.

Throughout this hugely spaced resort, modern design with a Québécois flavour is exhibited, such as the tapis tressé in common areas and décor that brings to mind the sport hunting and fishing activities that were historically common in the area.

In winter, visitors are more inclined to book a room with a view on the 'mountain side.' The resort is located at the bottom of one of the most beautiful and dramatic downhill ski mountains in Québec – Le Massif.

Skis are kept in lockers leading to the bottom of the ski trails and walking tours into the woods leave from this area. We enjoyed walking tours in the late spring, especially Le Thé Forestier, a walk with a guide who pointed out different plant species used for medicinal purposes. We tasted many, although not all were necessarily native to the mountain.

Power walks and mountain biking are also available. Truth be told, spring is the off season, so although there may be less to do outside, entertainment and fun workshops are ubiquitous. Summer, fall (for the spectacular colours here) and winter (for the skiing and other winter sports) are certainly more popular.

How is it that you're not familiar with this region? One hundred years ago, it was the summer playground for the well-heeled from northern US and Montréal.

US president Taft said of the area, "the air was intoxicating like champagne without the morning-after hangover." He was referring to La Malbaie, then known as Murray Bay. For some reason, Charlevoix fell off the international tourist radar, although it's been long known within Québec for its fabulous terroir products and stunning landscapes.

Le Massif ski hill is probably making Charlevoix a destination for the international traveller once again.

As mentioned, artists have been travelling to, and often settling in, Charlevoix for well over a century. Not surprisingly, every fall there is a huge art symposium in Baie-Saint-Paul, located 15 minutes from the Club Med.

Artists from around the world are invited, and Baie-Saint-Paul's main street, Avenue Saint-Jean-Baptiste, is quite literally packed with art galleries. In the summer, the street is usually streaming with visitors.

One stop you don't want to miss is the newly opened Hydromel, at 49 Saint-Jean-Baptiste, just behind the Tony & Charlo Bistro. Honey wines, distilled from honey collected across Charlevoix are available in four different flavours, and in a gin. Another two local cheese producers not to be missed are La Famille Migneron and the Laiterie Charlevoix, both on the main road that links Baie-Saint-Paul with La Malbaie (not the scenic route, faster but still very worthwhile).

Food is also big in Baie-Saint-Paul, with local chefs being celebrated with their own 'walk of stars' à la Hollywood. The annual festival, Cuisine, Cinéma et Confidences, is well worth attending. We did the three-hour food tour (sounds so much better in French, le Parcours Gourmand) and enjoyed highly original tastings of wine and food in four cozy settings.

Later, we attended intimate workshops with stars of the Québec food scene, Pasquale Vari and Soeur Angèle. This would be the equivalent of having an almost one-on-one meeting with Gordon Ramsay or Julia Child in the English-speaking world.

At a winery between the Club Med and Baie-Saint-Paul is a unique local beverage, wine from the ancestral tomatoes. The owner, from Belgium, found the perfect micro-climate to grow his tomatoes and produce this family recipe, a homage to the owner's great grandfather, Omer. Omerto is a must-stop visit! |

*For IF YOU GO information, visit [www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/club-med-charlevoix-quebec](http://www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/club-med-charlevoix-quebec)*

Photo by Karli Meddig

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# IN MY DNA

by SAM MARGOLIS

Throughout her life, Valerie Green has never been far from a pen and paper. “I started writing when I was a child. I always knew I wanted to write. I see a story in everything,” she says.

Possessed with a passion for history, too, Valerie has authored more than 20 books on topics such as heritage homes, real whodunits and social issues. Her latest writing venture, *The McBride Chronicles*, however, is a departure from familiar terrain: a jump from non-fiction to novels. The four-part series looks at the history of BC through the eyes of fictionalized characters.

“I have always loved history,” says Valerie. “But in the back of my mind I wanted to write these novels. It is a historical series through generations of one family. It starts in the 1850s through to the fourth book, which will be in the present day.”

*Providence*, the first installment, published in December 2022, sets the scene in England and Scotland, with Jane, an orphan, and Gideon, the son of a poor fisherman, who travel separately to the new continent in search of a better life.

They meet and marry in Victoria where Gideon finds what will become a family business. Subsequent books, *Destiny*, *Legacy* and *Tomorrow*, will tell the stories of their descendants, with BC’s vibrant history in the background.

“I like to think of it as a definitive history of British Columbia told by fictional people who actually lived it,” says Valerie.

When switching from writing non-fiction to writing novels, Valerie explains the shift.

“Instead of telling a story as you tend to do in journalism, in fiction you have to show the scenes more,” she says. “It is a transition from telling to showing. And that was hard for me at first. But gradually the more I was writing, the more these characters came alive. I felt I have lived with them for the last few years.”

Valerie’s own story is as compelling as her oeuvre is prolific and her curiosity insatiable. Born in England, she



studied journalism, short-story writing and English literature at The Regent Institute of Journalism in London in the 1960s.

Fresh out of school, Valerie got her start as a cub reporter for a weekly paper in Essex, and, for a short time, enjoyed a stint at the War Office for the British intelligence agency MI5.

“When I tell people that, they always ask, ‘Wow, did you know James Bond?’” she smiles.

Valerie immigrated to Canada in 1968, met her husband, started a family and, all the while, immersed herself in the history and lore of her new surroundings. Her non-fiction work spans the gamut of regional history, from the notable turn-of-the-century families that initially settled on southern Vancouver Island to the unsavory yet colourful characters of the Pacific Northwest who tested the limits of societal norms.

Her book *Above Stairs: Social Life in Upper-Class Victoria, 1843–1918* looks at the people who instituted the laws, surveyed the landscapes, established businesses, and set a standard of propriety for the city’s early inhabitants. *Upstarts and Outcasts*, on the other hand, researches the lives of a different set of Victoria pioneers – the madams, murderers and saloon keepers – and calls into question the “prim and proper” version of the city’s history.

ABOVE | Author Valerie Green holds a copy of her latest novel *Providence*.  
Photo: David W. Green

Valerie has also chronicled the story of the Vantreights, a well-known Saanich peninsula farming family; explored the myth and mysteries of numerous local legends; and examined the Michael Dunahee case, the story of a four-year-old boy's disappearance and what has become one of the largest police investigations in Canadian history.

She brought her own involvement in looking after elderly parents to the page in *Embrace the Journey: A Care Giver's Story*. This personal account retells her experience when, in mid-life, Valerie confronted the challenging and often heart-wrenching decisions that needed to be made for parents who wished to "age in place." The book also provides a shared universal perspective on caring for the elderly and serves as a resource for those who offer such care.

Aside from her books, Valerie's career includes a weekly article for *The Saanich News*, a regular column in Sidney's *Seaside Magazine*, frequent contributions to *The Times Colonist* in Victoria and pieces for publications across BC.

When she is not writing, Valerie likes being behind the lens of a camera, travelling to the various gems located all around the province and spending time with her grandchildren.

Yet before long, she is back at her desk.

"I have a few other ideas after this current series is out. I will still be writing when I am 100," she predicts. "I can't imagine doing anything else. It is in my DNA." |

*Providence* can be purchased at bookstores in Victoria or by visiting the author website [www.valeriegreenauthor.com](http://www.valeriegreenauthor.com)



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# CULINARY LAVENDER

by NANCY J. SCHAAF



Lavender, one of the most popular smells in human history, has been celebrated worldwide for over 2,500 years. The ancient Egyptians used this flowering herb for its potent fragrance during mummification, and the Greeks developed treatments for everything from insomnia to backaches. The Romans employed the herb so often for healing baths that the word lavender comes from the Latin verb *lavare* meaning “to wash.”

During the Middle Ages, people started using this herb in culinary preparations and medicine. Lavender’s popularity increased across the Mediterranean, blending into the cuisines of Spain, France, Italy and England by the 17th century.

In modern times, the intense scent of lavender is traditionally the essential ingredient in soaps, perfumes, aerosol sprays, lotions, potpourris and candles. The perfumed herb is also enjoying a culinary moment.

My experience with lavender occurred while having dinner at a local restaurant.

For bread dipping, the server poured olive oil and dark vinegar on a plate, and I dipped my bread into the concoction and discovered a delicious flavour. To my surprise, the server added lavender balsamic vinegar to the olive oil. I never expected lavender would be so tasty.

Lavender’s initial sensory impact is an intense floral flavour and aroma, with subtle notes of earthiness and mint. Different lavender varieties can take on other fruit, smoke and woodiness undertones, making it a complex culinary herb. English lavender is the most popular choice for culinary purposes and can be used fresh or dried.

Lavender is a delightful addition to everyday foods and offers a different flavour from our usual herbs, spices and seasoning blends. Additionally, it pairs well with many of

our favourite foods and herbs, such as oregano, thyme and rosemary.

Using lavender in food adds an exciting new dimension to meals bringing a beautiful floral quality to numerous sweet and savory dishes. We can use every part of this unique herb in cooking, including the buds, stems and leaves. While the lavender flowers and leaves can be used fresh, the buds and stems should be dried. Only a small number of leaves or flowers is needed for culinary purposes.

Lavender leaves are edible and very intensely flavoured. If using the flowers, remove them from the spike, or use them whole. Dried lavender retains its aroma and flavour and lasts for several months in an airtight jar. If using fresh lavender rather than dried, increase the quantity by three.

French lavender is frequently included in the herb blend Herbs de Provence, which benefits from the subtle floral flavour. Lavender can be used similarly to fresh rosemary in meat marinades and baked breads.

Lavender flowers make a beautiful garnish for salads, desserts and other dishes. Toss fresh lavender leaves into a salad to add a splash of colour, and sprinkle the buds over ice cream, a glass of sparkling wine, or a cake.

Other suggestions for lavender include adding it to tomato-based dishes like soups and sauces, fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, peaches and cherries, and tart citrusy foods like lemon.

Lavender enhances the flavours of sweet and creamy foods like custards. Of course, as anything goes well with chocolate, adding lavender creates a unique flavour. Salad dressings, roasted veggies and chicken, fish, and beef dishes

are appetizing with the addition of lavender.

Get creative with lavender. Lavender salt is easy and provides a delicious rub for grilled meats and as a seasoning for roasted veggies. Or make lavender honey by infusing honey with fresh or dried lavender. Use this aromatic honey in sauces and a soothing cup of hot tea.

Always use culinary lavender in cooking or baking. Using lavender flowers in cooked foods, like cookies, cakes, roasted veggies or soups – fresh or dried flowers will be perfect. However, use only dried when making things like infused oils or honey, where the extra water content of fresh flowers would decrease the shelf stability.

Cooking, eating and drinking are intrinsic parts of everyday life, so be adventurous and try new flavours like lavender. |

## HOW TO MAKE LAVENDER VINEGAR

### INGREDIENTS:

Choose a vinegar such as white wine, apple cider or balsamic.

Dried lavender, approximately 2 handfuls

### DIRECTIONS:

Crush the lavender in a jar. Then pour the vinegar over the flower buds. Use a ratio of 1-part flowers to 3 parts vinegar. Cover with a plastic lid or parchment paper between the metal lid and jar to prevent corrosion. Allow the mixture to infuse out of direct sunlight for 4 weeks, shaking occasionally. Strain mixture. Keep the tightly sealed bottle in the refrigerator for a shelf life of 7 months.

# FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



## TIPS FOR BACK PAIN RELIEF

Got an ache in the back? Join the crowd. Back pain is the most common injury complaint. Almost one-third of Canadians experience it.

Pain is classified as either chronic or acute. The most common causes of chronic back pain are poor posture, inactivity (which results in muscle weakness and imbalances), or excess body weight. Pain becomes chronic if there is a lack of knowledge on how to be more efficient with your body and overcome any bad habits you develop. Even after an injury – when the tissues have healed – bad habits can persist. However, we can control diet, exercise and posture, so many cases of chronic back pain can be avoided.

The most common cause of acute back pain (injury) is trauma to the muscles, tendons, ligaments, intervertebral discs or joints of the back. Temporary rest, ice and patience are the best treatments directly following an injury.

But don't stay inactive for too long. Gentle activity is healing. Being sedentary or confining yourself to bed rest for too long will slow healing and can worsen the condition.

At about age 25, the intervertebral cartilage is no longer serviced by blood and lymph for food supply and waste removal. As we age, the body begins to rely mostly on body movements (including breathing) for these functions to occur. This is another reason why regular moderate activity should be continued as we age.

Growth plates fuse as we age, so a pumping action is needed for proper circulation. This can include activities like walking. And proper breathing helps, too. Yoga can be good for backache because of its breathing practices. But be cautious when practicing the postures and stretches in yoga: some are good, and some are bad for back pain. Check with your physiotherapist. If you have back pain, it's wise to have a coach or guidance regarding exercise.

Most therapists suggest avoiding the double leg raise exercise. This exercise for the abdominals is done with the legs held entirely straight. Gymnasts and swimmers doing the butterfly need to do double leg raises. But the exercise is not necessary for the average person.

Straight leg sit-ups or crunches can also increase the risk of low back pain. In any case, abdominal exercises (like sit-ups) are ineffective in strengthening the back muscles. See a certified exercise coach to learn exercises more beneficial for the torso's deep 'core' muscles.

Hanging from a chin-up bar is often suggested as an effective lower back stretching exercise, but only if you can relax your back muscles while you 'hang.' Tense muscles will keep the discs compressed tightly together, not letting them 'stretch' out.

To 'hang' properly, grasp an overhead bar and let your body relax into a dead hang (let your chin fall to your chest – don't drop your head backward). Let your feet touch the floor, but keep your legs relaxed, bending them at the knees to keep most of your body weight off your feet. Hang for 15 to 30 seconds while consciously relaxing the muscles in your back. Rest and repeat as often as needed.

Aches and pains can also be a warning sign that muscles are tired, especially if they've been in one position for too long, like sitting or standing for more than an hour. Get up and move around or do some light stretches. When standing for long periods, elevate your feet alternately, propping one foot on a low stool. This allows the lower back muscles to relax and helps prevent muscle fatigue.

You don't have to settle for a bad back. More is known about back pain today, and treatments have improved. You can learn to be more functional by empowering yourself with information to take control of your pain. |

**Eve Lees** has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Currently, she is a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and speaks to business and private groups on various health topics. [www.artnews-healthnews.com](http://www.artnews-healthnews.com)



# GETAWAY TO GANANOQUE

by JANE CASSIE

“Welcome to Gananoque,” my husband reads, pronouncing it incorrectly, as we cruise beneath the stone and timber archway. “It’s actually Gan-an-ock-way,” I respond, sounding out each syllable, “and it means a *place of health*.” During this two-day getaway (while reminding him of the pronunciation at least a dozen more times), we discover that this hamlet, 30 minutes east of Kingston, Ontario, lives up to its name.

Though the First Nations people take credit for its meaning, British loyalist, Joel Stone established it as a township in 1792. A few years later, the neighbouring St. Lawrence River became a popular spot for war engagements and, on September 21, 1812, this ‘Gateway to the Thousand Islands’ was invaded. But by the mid-1800s, things had settled down, factories and castles emerged along the nearby shorelines and settlers came from far afield to live in this riverside oasis.

A self-guided walking tour weaves over the downtown core and sheds light on this past. Up front and centre is the Arthur Child Heritage Museum, an amazing depository that archives everything from the early fur traders to founding fathers. Steps away is the Town Hall, a brick-pillared gem that has served multiple purposes since 1831: courthouse, jail hall, meeting space and, today, a wedding venue.

Tree-lined roads branch out from the main body of King Street and welcome us like open arms. We saunter by Auberge Victoria Rose, once the elaborate summer home of the city’s first mayor, check out the neo-gothic architecture of the origi-

nal 1888 post office, and photograph the stunning stained glass that embellishes two lovely limestone churches.

Just beyond, perched over the river’s edge, is the Thousand Islands Playhouse. For the past 40 years, this century-old structure has been luring screenplay aficionados. There are two venues to choose from – somewhat edgier productions at the Firehall stage or more traditional performances at the Springer. We opt for the latter and see *Till It Hurts* – a raging comedy about an exasperating telemarketer and a frazzled professor. And throughout the entire two hours, the witty writing, stellar acting and amusing one-liners keep us in stitches.

It’s no surprise that glorious Gananoque attracts lots of artisans. As well as this venue, we browse through works in the Woodchuck Gallery, creative pieces at the VAGA (Visual Arts of Gananoque and Area) and displays at the Three Horse Art Show, an annual exhibit of original watercolours, oils and acrylics in the nearby community of Lansdowne.

And when it’s time to really escape, we head to the Glen House Resort, a getaway gem six kilometres from town that hugs up to its own scalloped shoreline. Since 1963, the Seal family

ABOVE | Towers and turrets of Boldt Castle.

TOC | One of the velvety fairways of Smuggler’s Glen. Photos: Brent Cassie



has maintained its century-old legacy by integrating vacationing pleasures with regional treasures.

Assorted accommodations that sprawl over the lush property unite with recreation pastimes, spa pampering and culinary options. And though the fronting St. Lawrence River is a favourite spot for boaters and fishers, we find the backdrop just as alluring – 18 velvety fairways of Smuggler’s Glen.

“You’d better take a few extra balls,” advises the receptionist at the golf pro shop, as we head out on the back nine of this Barr-designed beauty. I’d read that parts of this course were etched out of craggy Canadian Shield and dotted with a few tricky bunkers. But with five ability levels at each tee to choose from, how many balls could I lose? I end up following his recommendation – and it’s a good thing I do.

My first is gobbled up by the rough stuff that fringes the elevated tenth tee. Coinciding ponds on fairway 12 drink up two more. A stand of white pine and thick bordering flora are now home to a few others. Yet despite my loss on these links, it’s been well worth it. From the manicured fairways, undulating plateaus and promontory bluffs, we’ve been rewarded with scenic views. And even though I only have one ball remaining at the end of the game, I’d gladly do it all over again!

On our final day, we head out on a boat tour and, with Captain Jack at the helm, we cruise the neighbouring Thousand Islands. “This destination is somewhat of a misnomer,” we’re told through the loudspeakers. “There are actually 1,864 islands in this archipelago that straddles the Canada/US border.”

The Thousand Islands Bridge offers another link to our American neighbours, and dotting the sapphire water just beyond are countless evergreen gems that range in size from rocky outcroppings to 100 sq km landscapes. Some are home to shore-rimmed shacks, others to palatial manors. As well as luring the rich and royal, many have been past haunts to famous singers, songwriters, businessmen and barons.

The major feature en route is the Boldt Castle, a mansion of towers and turrets and the story of a man’s love and loss. In 1904, self-made millionaire, George C. Boldt had this 120-room estate constructed especially for his wife, but she died before this gift was completed. All building was abruptly stopped, and the broken-hearted widower never returned. For decades it was left abandoned and fell mercy to weathering and vandalism. But, in 1977, it became a major restoration project and since then has been revived to a magnificent state.

After looping beyond this fortress, we retrace our route and take in more scenic overload. Jet skiers, swanky yachts and fishing boats join us in skimming the surface while divers dressed in neoprene seek out the treasures beneath. “Because of so many shipwrecks, I’ve heard this is one of the best fresh-water diving destinations in the world,” I say to my husband as we pull into the dock at Gananoque. “Maybe that’s why the Indigenous named it ‘The Garden of the Great Spirit.’

“And right next to this place of health,” he replies. “It’s gotta be good – whether you pronounce it properly or not!” |

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# SWEET, SWEET SUGAR SHACKS

by KATE ROBERTSON

As a Canadian, I'm often asked if there really is a secret vault filled with sweet golden maple syrup somewhere in Canada. There is, in Laurierville, close to Québec City. Canada accounts for 75 per cent or so of the global maple syrup market, with Québec representing over 95 per cent of Canadian exports.

Even though maple syrup is so intrinsically Canadian, it took a spring trip to some Québec cabanes à sucre (sugar shacks) for me to dig into the illustrious sugar bush's roots.

At Rigaud, an hour from Montreal, a drive down a picturesque side road lined with maple trees brings me to Sucrerie de la Montagne, where I meet with owner Pierre Faucher. A burly man with a Santa-style beard, Faucher's wearing the traditional garb worn by coureurs des bois, French Canadian traders of the 1600s. Over a glass of Wapiti, his own maple-infused wine, he talks me through the 45-year history of his cabane, the only sugar shack recognized as both a Québec National Historic Site and a Canadian Tourism Commission signature experience.

"When I started," says Faucher, "I just wanted a sugar shack to make maple syrup, feed people and to live in nature." It was important to him to keep his family's Québécois traditions alive. In the late '80s and early '90s, he salvaged some old cabins from around the countryside and now offers four rustic cabins for overnight guests.

Maple sap, which syrup is made from, varies each year, and Faucher advises that 2022 was a good year. Sap flow is temperature dependent, requiring a specific rise above 0C and overnight freezing. "Always before a change of temperature, the trees react. Tomorrow it's going to rain," says Faucher, "so the sap might run all night long."

At Sucrerie, they continue to collect the syrup by hand in buckets, a centuries-old method. Various grades of maple

syrup are made, from light golden yellow at the beginning of the season, to the more popular dark earthy amber, harvested toward the end of the season when the tree is pulling more minerals.

Out front of the sugar-boiling shack, tire d'érable, a staple at all sugar shacks, is poured in lines on clean snow and, as it cools, popsicle sticks are used to roll the maple taffy into a chewy lollipop. The wood-fired bakery is pumping out fresh loaves of bread daily.

Sugar shack meals tend to be hearty fare, traditional dishes eaten by early harvesters who spent long, cold days in the woods. Feasts are generally some combination of pea soup, baked beans, cretons (minced pork and spices), oreilles de crisse (fried pork rinds), omelette, ham and sausage cooked in maple syrup and tourtière meat pie. A jug of maple syrup on the table is for pouring over everything.

For dessert there's maple sugar pie, for sure, and sometimes other dishes like homemade donuts. More often than not, as you eat, there will be musicians playing rigodon, traditional Québécois folk music featuring fiddles, the accordion and musical spoons.

Just south and east of Montreal – farm country filled with silos and orchards – my next stop is at Érablière la Goudrelle. This Mont Saint Grégoire region is known as the capital of sugar shacks, with seven established cabanes de sucre, four within two kilometres of each other.

ABOVE | Owner Pierre Faucher and Simon, the maple syrup maker at Sucrerie de la Montagne.

PAGE 17 | Tire d'érable at Érablière Prince. Photos: Kate Robertson

Goudrelle is also a family operation, established in 1948. Here I meet manager and family member, Camélie Gingras, who shows me around the massive lodge which can seat 1,000 hungry folks at a time in several large hall-style dining rooms.

Goudrelle has incorporated some modern touches like a small vegetarian buffet, options to what is traditionally a meat-heavy meal. Within the building, there is also a dance hall, and outside a small petting zoo and kids' aerial course park. Like most, their syrup technology is modern with blue tubing stretched between the trees, carrying the maple water to a central station for production.

At Mont-Saint-Hilaire, I visit La Maison Amérindienne, a museum that highlights First Nations people. There's evidence of Indigenous in this region for at least 4,000 years, and the maple forests date back at least 5,000. In fact, it was Indigenous people who taught the early settlers how to harvest the sweet sap and boil it to make maple syrup. The Québécois also copied the initial Indigenous gatherings for sugar season.

During maple season, a large iron pot hangs in the firepit at the front entrance of the museum to boil maple sap, and Indigenous-inspired, maple-infused meals are served. Their famous sugar pie is available year-round in the café.

Further north is Érablé Prince in Saint-Wenceslas. Family operated since 1967, Érablé Prince has a real small-community-hall feel to it. Snow is still on the ground here at the beginning of April, and sixth-generation Marion Prince and I line up for a sleigh ride. As we circle through the maple forest, she points out



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relics handed down through the generations. Other activities are a museum filled with old farm artifacts and a petting zoo.

My last stop is at Érablière Aux Petits Plaisirs in Warwick. Even though owners Frédéric and Marie-Eve Goyer have only been in business for 10 years, Frédéric's grandma served sugar shack meals in her home for over 50 years, and they've strived to bring her traditional recipes to life.



Part of their niche is to combine traditional dishes with new gourmet experiences. Meals are served through the sugaring season, but products like their signature saucisses moreaux (named after Frédéric's grandma), an artisanal sausage made from beef that they raise, are available all year long. Cooking classes are also offered to teach people how to make their own maple products.

Even though there are traditional similarities between all the sugar shacks, each one really does have a unique flair. If you want to experience a few, like I did, it's easy to drive between them. Be sure to reserve ahead if you want to enjoy a meal, as they book up fast. Weekends are busiest when families commonly get together to celebrate at their favourite cabane. Most places (except for Sucrierie de la Montagne, which is open year-round) operate for two months during the sugaring off season, generally from the end of February to the end of April.

What a sweet Canadian tradition. |

For *IF YOU GO* information, visit [www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/sugar-shacks-quebec](http://www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/sugar-shacks-quebec)



## DEBBIE & STEVE

Debbie and Steve crossed paths as students while living in co-op housing in Kingston, Ontario in 1978. “We met socially,” says Debbie, “and started dating soon after.”

She then moved to Toronto to work as a Child & Youth School Counsellor after graduating in 1979. They commuted until Steve finished his engineering studies a year later.

When they were married in 1982, living in Toronto, they had no plans to move out west 28 years later, but they did just that when they retired in their mid-50s.

They first visited BC when Steve, a fibre optics engineer, was attending a course in his hobby of making fine furniture, on the Sunshine Coast.

“We liked it out here, with the possibility of a milder winter,” they say. “And our son was living in Kamloops.”

“We just knew,” adds Debbie, after checking out numerous potential locations on Vancouver Island, “that Saltair was the perfect place for us to build our retirement home,” which they did in 2010.

To get to know their neighbours, the couple opened their home by hosting music house parties through Home Routes/Chemin Chez Nous, a cross-Canada not-for-profit arts organization that coordinates Canadian home concerts for musicians.

“We saw it as a community service,” says Debbie. “Hosting the musicians for the night at our house was a bonus.”

Once socializing resumed post-pandemic, Debbie and Steve decided to pursue their other hobby, contra dancing.

“It’s very inclusive,” says Debbie, “and good exercise for both the brain and body. We line dance and square dance with a caller and a live band.”

The couple drives to Victoria a few weekends a month to dance with Victoria Contra Dances, a volunteer-run organization.

Ironically it was Steve, initially reluctant to participate, that ended up being the better dancer, according to Debbie.

“The repetitiveness of the dance is good exercise for the brain,” she adds. “Dancers’ memories improve over time.”

Steve says he also gets to use his engineering skills to support the sound technician.

Both Debbie and Steve, now in their mid-60s, strongly believe in giving their retired time to volunteer with organizations that support their passions and give energy back to a community network.

“It’s good for all of us,” they agree. |

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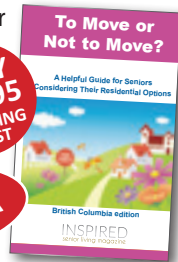



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# WHERE THOUGHTS GO, ENERGY FLOWS



*Living*  
on purpose

by LAURIE MUELLER

It's important for us to ask the right questions. When we ask ourselves a question, our subconscious mind attempts to answer it. It looks for examples and evidence to prove the worth of the question.

How happy can we be? How good can this get? How much love can this world give?

We need to be deliberate about our questions just as we need to be deliberate about our other thoughts. Life is good... and when we look for the good, we notice the good. We build on the good.

I cringe when I hear someone say, 'How bad can this get?' or 'How much worse can this get?' I have a better question, 'How can I make this better?'

You may have heard this multiple times before, and if you are anything like me, you may need a reminder from time to time.

Some of you may laugh! Laughter is good. Doesn't it make you feel good to laugh?

Who are the people around you? Are they the gloomy Guses or are they people that find the goodness in life? I am not saying that we can't be good listeners when someone is working through a life circumstance. We may fulfill a needed role in those cases. I'm talking about everyday conversations in which we can be positive and upbeat and appreciative of all we receive and have to offer.

The other day I said to my friend, 'Sandy, I have no memory.'

'No! No!' She said to me. 'You have a good memory. You need to remind yourself of that.'

I tried again, 'Well, I have no memory sometimes and sometimes I have a memory.' She looked directly into my eyes and said, 'You have a good memory.' 'Okay! I got it, I have a good memory.' And then I thought about it, 'Yes, I do have a good memory. I write stories about memories and I'm always sharing stories of things I have experienced in the past. I have an amazing memory!'

Sandy reminded me, 'Where your thoughts go, energy flows.'

Many speakers, teachers and spiritual leaders encourage us to walk on the positive side of life. And yet, sometimes we find ourselves falling back into negativity. The antidote to that is several-fold:

1. Give your body a little shake and tell yourself 'It's all good, I'm going to be positive about this good life I lead – starting right now.'
2. Hang out (do we still hang out at our age?) with other positive people.
3. Practise gratitude. What are you thankful for this week? How can you continue manifesting more of the same?
4. Think about the people around you. How can you be a positive influence in their lives? When was the last time you said I love you to your partner or family members? When was the last time you told them you were proud of them?

When my children's father died, my son, Chris, said to me, 'I didn't tell Dad enough that I loved him. I'm not going to make that mistake again. Mom, I love you, and I'm going to keep telling you that, over and over.' Eighteen years later, he still tells me, and I tell him back. It brings me joy to hear and say those words.

How much better can our life be? I would love to hear your positive stories. |

Laurie Mueller, M.ED is retired and living in Victoria with her husband, Helmuth. Her book *The Ultimate Guide on What to do When Someone You Love Dies* is available on Amazon. More about Laurie can be found at [www.lauriemconsulting.com](http://www.lauriemconsulting.com) or on Facebook.

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