

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

MAR / APR 2024

The Man in Back:
Life as a Background Actor

Chasing Air and Water
near Likely BC

The Spirit of
Bella Coola

DARLENE TAIT
ACTOR

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Cover Darlene Tait

After a successful career in travel and real estate, Darlene applies her same dedication to acting.

Photo: Shimon Karmel

resources

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Atnarko River in the beautiful Bella Coola region.

Photo: Linda Blair

Celebrating
20 Years of
Publishing

THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO



Health and happiness. Aren't those the things we desire the most out of this life? In truth, one is really meaningless without the other.

It was such a joy to edit the stories that went into this issue, because they all embody the essence of health and happiness.

You will meet people who find their bliss in a variety of ways. Some find it in nature and adventure as they seek out beautiful untamed spots in our beautiful province of British Columbia.



LEFT | The start of my no-dig garden project, laying cardboard and spreading wheelbarrows full of dirt and gravel.

RIGHT | Things are shaping up. It's starting to look like the cottage garden of my imagination.

Others find it in the process of storytelling through film and movies.

In "Bloom to Bloom," you sense the joy as the author puts her fingers back into the soil after a long illness.

Last year I started a no-dig cottage garden in my front yard. I may have been sweating on the outside, but I was beaming on the inside with each new plant and pop of colour. As I moved mountains of dirt and gravel, I imagined the fairytale garden I would sit in soon.

A couple weeks ago, I took a one-day certification course for people who want to get into the



film industry, and discovered just how prolific the movie production industry is in BC.

Our picturesque province is often called the Hollywood of the North, and it certainly lives up to the reputation when you find out how many movies get produced here. I'm ready to take the next step when an opportunity shows up.

This is life. Trying new things, reaching beyond our comfort zone. With just a little bit of courage and imagination anything is possible.

Maybe one of the stories in this issue will spark you to consider what else you could be doing to increase the happiness and health in your life?

Need more inspiration? Join me on March 19th at our 55+ Lifestyle Show. (See page 17 for all the details.)

You'll get a chance to meet Darlene Tait (the actor on this issue's cover) in person.

You'll also meet veteran broadcasters Michael Forbes and Lisa Marshall, performing the emcee duties at the event. Michael will even model some of Blue Sky Clothing's menswear during the fashion show.

The very popular Victoria Ballroom Society is back to provide some elegant dance demonstrations.

At 2pm, we'll introduce you to three amazing women who have gotten the full makeover treatment from head to foot. You'll want to see their transformations after our talented stylists get their hands on them.

There's never a dull moment for today's adventurous 55+ crowd! I'm sure you'll find plenty of resources to enrich your happiness and support your journey to health. |

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Snapshot

with Darlene Tait

What advice would you give your younger self?

Your body might be able to handle anything now, but please take better care of yourself.

Who has been most influential in your life?

I would have to say my mother and father. They had such a brilliant way of helping me navigate the world and the perspectives I brought to a situation. It has stayed with me through my life and allowed me to grow into an extremely positive individual.

What does courage mean to you?

Courage is not wanting the battle but engaging anyway. I don't always win, but when I do, I'm very happy and I recognize that it is the kind of thinking that got me where I am.

What does success mean to you?

I would say healthy, happy children who are exceptional partners to the women in their lives, who love what they do, who are contributing citizens, positive forces. Ones that call all the time just to say, "Mom, I love you." That's success. I'm living it.

DARLENE TAIT: A Hallmark Success Story

by KATHLEEN ARNASON

It's only been a year since Darlene Tait started acting in Hallmark movies, but it's a dream that took root when she was a young girl, weaving stories as her brothers and friends lay on their pillows hanging onto every word she spoke in the backyard tent her parent set up each summer.

"I have always loved storytelling and now I am an actor living my dream at 65 years of age."

"I grew up as a military child. There were a lot of rules around how you behave. To find myself participating in a craft where all the rules come off, it's like, oh, my gosh! This is a huge gift. I love my life!"

Darlene's career path began in sales and marketing with Canadian Pacific Air Lines (CP Air) which became Canadian Airlines.

"I was literally hired off the street and placed in the reservations department. Within a couple years I was managing a sales team of about 75 people. I then moved over to district sales."

A large part of Darlene's job was taking corporate executives around the world.

"I handled the airlines, sales and travel agency business in the Vancouver region. I was trained as a flight attendant, in the event of a strike, but I never actually flew as a flight attendant."

During that time, Darlene met and married her husband of 38 years. "I met him on a blind date and we were engaged the next weekend." She has two sons, a stepson, and two grandchildren.

After a move to Kelowna and then Cologne Germany, Darlene resigned from her corporate job and started her own travel sales and service company, getting contracts with larger travel agencies like American Express.

When the next move brought her back to Victoria BC, Darlene started to get involved in real estate, again from a sales and marketing perspective, working for about 30 years with David Butterfield, a well-known developer of large sustainable communities.

In 2002, Darlene and her husband went to Mexico to set up the ground team and launch a development called The Villages of Loreto Bay.

"We worked alongside the Mexican government. It was a very innovative plan for homes about 5 or 10 minutes out of Loreto, a small fishing village. I was part of the marketing and sales launch of that project. My husband headed up the development and the local liaison with officials."

When the real estate market softened in 2007/2008, it hit them hard but Darlene and her husband stayed and opened up a bar in a restaurant.

"Our plan was to retire full time in Mexico. Then my husband had a heart attack."

Darlene and her husband came back to Victoria in 2012, where he had quintuple bypass surgery.

"It was time for another about-face in the career business. That was when I got into film and I have never looked back."

She became an active member of the Victoria Film community.

"I've always sought to be part of associated groups in whatever industry I was in. With film, I had a considerable

INSPIRED PODCAST

Long-time broadcasters Michael Forbes and Lisa Marshall, known as "Forbes and Marshall," combine their love of broadcasting and helping older adults with their real estate needs in a new podcast, in collaboration with INSPIRED Magazine.

Check out this month's interview with Darlene Tait at www.seniorlivingmag.com/podcast





Photo: Shimon Karmel

business background and felt that it might be of use to emerging filmmakers and organizations.

Darlene Tait currently serves as Vice President on the Board of the South Island Film Commission and Past President of the Board of the Cinevic Independent Film Society. She recently retired from the Board of Women in Film and Television Vancouver (WIFTV).

“There is nothing quite so satisfying

as watching filmmaker careers take off and I always loved being a part of it regardless of the volunteer role I might have played.”

“For me volunteerism is a way to give back in the real meaningful sense of the word. I don’t just sit on boards though, I dive in and volunteer in numerous ways. In some ways it can also be strategic – it is an opportunity to meet industry people who you may potentially develop a business or creative

partnership with. It is the best way to contribute and network in any business or industry.”

Instead of attending acting school, Darlene took advantage of the many courses and weekend workshops offered in Vancouver and on Vancouver Island and has trained with “some of the best instructors in the region.”

She started out involving herself in the indie film world, volunteering for different positions as a crew member.

“I felt I needed an education in how a film set works.”

She then applied and was accepted by UBCP/ACTRA - the Union of BC Performers (provincial) as part of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists.

Once you join a union, you are prohibited from working non-union, says Darlene.

“Independent films are probably 95% non-union. I had to make a conscious decision to take a leap into a world that was quite different; the professional film world versus the independent film world. I’d poured a lot of time and money into building a film career, and I felt like now was the time to take that leap where I would get paid for acting. I joined the union just over a year ago and got a rock star agent. Joining the union really marked the transition.”

Making the transition to being in front of a camera took study and practice but Darlene’s background in business and presentations has also helped.

“When I was in the development business, I had to address large professional associations and groups. I’ve always been quite comfortable on stage. The older I get, the less I even think about it. Life experience is a huge benefit for an actor.”

Darlene explains that you don’t go in and try to be somebody else. You are yourself in a different role.

“Somebody once explained it to me that every character is you with a different history in a different set of circumstances. What you do is learn everything you can about the history of that character. You know how they were born, what their upbringing and careers were like, and you wrap yourself in that.”

Darlene recently landed a supporting role as Grandma Gertie in a Hallmark movie of the week called “Fourth Down and Love” – a fall-themed movie based on a football star where her grandson (Ryan Paevey) recovers from a football injury and falls back in love with a high school flame (Pascale Hutton).

“It has received favourable reviews and the Hallmark fans love it!”

Hallmark is quite a big umbrella, according to Darlene.

“They have a number of different sub genres. They have their countdowns to Christmas, their movies, mysteries and seasonal films. They seek to be really uplifting and hopeful.”

“Hallmark has an amazing fan base. Hallmark movie fans sometimes watch a movie dozens of times. You could sit down with anybody and never have a moment of embarrassment because there’s nothing too adult going on, just good wholesome romance. They’re very family centric.”

Hallmark is very good at production. “They are so efficient. They shoot one of these movies of the week in 15 days.”

To land on a Hallmark set as an actor you have to be prepared.

“They don’t have time to mess around dealing with actors who forget lines or don’t know the fundamentals of camera work and filming. Hallmark movies are often the first door a lot of actors walk through. I happen to fit that Hallmark grandmother look and vibe. I love it. I would happily work all Hallmark.”

As a new actor still building her career, in her first year Darlene has gotten the equivalent of a full month of days on set.

She’s been thrilled to get some supporting roles.

“Generally, the route goes that you get a small part and you maybe have a line or two. You get a few of those, and then you get one that’s called a large principal, which maybe has half a dozen lines.”

“I had a one actor role with just a few lines in it. Then my next booking was supporting. I just about passed out when I got it. I was so surprised. Since then, I’ve had another supporting role. And I have booked some small roles.”

Because most of the provinces in Canada offer tax credits, there is a lot of incentive for productions to hire locally.

A day on set for Darlene starts at 6am when she presents herself to “the circus” – the place where the trailers and trucks are and where the wardrobe and makeup are located, usually near the set.

“You check in and are shown to your trailer. I get myself set up, ‘cause I’m going to be there for a few weeks. Then you wait. They come and get you for hair and makeup. By the time I get back, my wardrobe for that day is in my trailer. I get dressed, then spend time with my script. Nothing is shot in chronological order. As an actor, I have to find my place in the script.

“You wait to be called for blocking. That is usually your first time on set. You’ve got a director standing there with everybody in the scene that’s being shot. The director says, ‘Okay, this scene’s gonna start here’.

“They mark all the points where all the actors start their scenes from – you do a quick run-through of the lines – then you move, and when they say they want you to come around the corner of the table, this is called blocking.”

“Then you’re taken off set into a green room while the crew sets up the lighting and the cameras, based on the blocking. We’re called back on set. Everybody’s ready to go. They call lights, camera, sound, action.”

Age does have its hazards. A couple years ago, Darlene started getting stiffness in her hands and fingers, and pain in her shoulder.

“I went for a scan in Vancouver. The scan indicated a severe degenerative condition in the top of my neck, small of my back, and my hip. The swelling was related to a torn tendon on my right shoulder, and that was agony. I was essentially on the couch, my shoulder propped up by cushions on my neck. That is when I started eating and feeling sorry for myself, making wrong food choices and started to pile the weight on. Not great for an actor.”

It was a wake-up call to lose weight and pay more attention to her health.

“Eventually my shoulder did repair itself, though it is still not 100 per cent. Between the exercises for my neck and the weight loss I’m feeling better now than I’ve probably felt in the last 8 to 10 years.”

Like any career, acting has its challenges.

“We see a lot of people come into this business and not stay,



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and it's usually because it is a difficult craft to learn to do well. It can take a long time to build up a career. A lot of people are trying to support families or support themselves and it can be financially very difficult. Fortunately, I'm retired and I don't do it for the money."

Thanks to other movie icons who have woken the world to the value of older actors, Darlene has found her place in the industry. She mentions Judi Densch, Jamie Lee Curtis and Helen Mirren. "They're not all raving beauties, but we love them. We love them for their wisdom."

"I don't feel like the old lady in the room, though I joke about it all the time. I am loving that in many aspects of the film industry, older women are now being respected, appreciated, even celebrated, which I think is brilliant."

Darlene loves that she's in a place in her life where booking a role is inconsequential.

"At this age I have no delusions of grandeur at all. I'm just having fun. How many of us in our lifetimes get to the place where you have permission to be all these wonderfully awful, naughty, fun characters?"

"Things really started to click when getting the job no longer mattered. The craft of acting became the thing that motivated me. I love auditioning. It's fun to spend a whole day playing, living a whole different set of circumstances for the day." |



Darlene Tait with co-stars in Hallmark's *Fourth Down and Love*, Canadian actor Dan Payne (left) and American actor Ryan Paevey.

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THE MAN IN BACK: My Life as a Background Performer

by WAYNE FORSETH

Many people in Victoria know me as the long-time manager of the downtown Long & McQuade music store. I retired recently after a 40-year career.

Fewer people realize that, for many years, I was “the man in back.”

For decades, my side gig was working as a background performer (sometimes known as an “extra”) in film and television. It’s been tremendous fun. Along the way I’ve rubbed shoulders with a few celebrities — and collected my share of stories.

On my days off from Long & McQuade, I did background work in dozens of movies and TV shows locally shot. I did this for more than 30 years — I still do, in fact.

Most of these were filmed right in Victoria, although I did once work on a Hallmark Christmas movie in Whipple Tree Junction and another in the Shawnigan Lake area.

I’ve worked with a few big names such as Mel Gibson and Goldie Hawn in the action-comedy *A Bird on a Wire* (1990) as well as Leslie Neilson and Olympia Dukakis in a 1993 comedy-drama movie called *Digger*.

I also had the good fortune to work with Richard Dean Anderson in an episode of the TV series *MacGyver*. For that one I played the role of a hospital patient. The episode was filmed in and back of the Victoria Royal Museum, made to look like a hospital. Richard was friendly but other than an occasional nod and “Hi, how you doin’” I had little opportunity to chat with him.

I worked with Winona Ryder in the 1994 film *Little Women*. During the shoots she was very friendly. Back then she was going out with Dave Pirner, the lead vocalist of the rock band Soul Asylum. (They had a big hit with the single Runaway Train.)

Winona and Dave were mostly arm



and arm whenever she wasn't doing a scene. They seemed like a happy couple.

One scene commenced with Winona and I being in close physical proximity, so I had the chance to talk with her and Pirner a little. I told him I was the manager of a local music store and he said he'd like to drop by Long & McQuade to rent a guitar — which he did a couple of days later. I was a big fan of the band. It was a real treat meeting him.

My one scene in *Little Women* was simply to walk down the street carrying a ladder. I was told to stop at a building, put the ladder up against the building and to climb up the ladder to the rooftop to do some roof repairs. (the scene goes by very quickly, but we spent hours doing the scene as the director wanted to film it from many angles.) The movie was a period piece set in the mid to late 1800s, so my wardrobe had to look of that era.

In a series called *Terminal City* with Gil Bellows (he also played a lawyer on the TV series *Ally McBeal*) I had the part of a detective investigating a possible child abduction. I didn't have any lines, but it was still great.

I also played an inmate in a mental institution in a movie starring Wanda Sykes. The working title of the movie (which to this day has yet to be released) was *World's End*.

Ten of us were selected to play inmates in the mental institution. The funny thing was, our agent told us that “all of you have been selected to be inmates by the director of the movie. So do not change your look...do not get a haircut or change the colour of your hair...you have been picked based on your appearances and the filmmakers want you to show up on set looking exactly like your headshot on your resume.”

Later, we all had a good laugh, asking “is it a good thing to be picked by

our photos to be inmates in a mental institution? What does the director see in us to make him think we'll make good inmates in a mental institution?" I still ponder that question.

In all my years being a background performer I had a talking role just once. Just a short line. This was for a Japanese TV production, a bit similar to the American television show *60 Minutes*, in which they'd air re-enactments of some real-life event on each program.

This episode was about a 1999 bank robbery that happened in Victoria. The leader of the robbery was Stephen Reid, already notorious as a former member of the Stop-watch Gang which robbed millions of dollars from banks in the 1970s.

In the show I played a police officer who arrives at the bank and sees Reid talking to a teller while robbing the bank. I was instructed to say: "Hey, you — hold it right there!" The actor playing Reid was to turn, notice me, then make a mad dash to a back door of the bank with me in pursuit.

After the first run-through the director walked me back to my starting point and said, "Can you run a little slower this time...you almost caught him, and he's not captured in this scene."

When I saw the completed episode on a VHS tape years later (that's how long ago this was filmed), I was disappointed to see my one and only speaking role had been re-dubbed in Japanese for the Japanese audience.

Hey, that's show biz.

Sometimes funny things happen. For instance, on the set of *A Bird on a Wire* I was standing next to a man who was Mel Gibson's stunt double. (A double is the guy who performs all the dangerous stunts in the movie.) He was dressed exactly like Mel Gibson right down to the snake-skin boots he wears in the movie. He was similar in facial features to Gibson as well.

One day we were in Market Square in downtown Victoria, standing in an area that was roped off to keep the public from walking onto the set. Three giggling girls ducked under the rope and dashed up to Gibson's stunt double. They said, "Please, can we get a picture with you, Mel?" We looked at each other, grinning, and the stunt double said, "Okay, sure."

I took their camera, and the girls ran to the double's side. He put his arms around their shoulders. I took the photo, gave the camera back to the girls and they ran off giggling, thinking they'd just got a picture taken with a famous movie star.

A Bird on a Wire is directed by John Badham, a famous director who also did *Saturday Night Fever*. In one scene in *A Bird on a Wire* Gibson was supposed to ride up on a motorcycle and stop a few feet from a table where I was sitting. I'd been told to chat with a group of women, also background performers, while having a drink.

The plan was for Gibson to ride up, stop, and yell at Goldie Hawn to jump on the back of his bike. Then they were to speed off with someone else in hot pursuit.

So, Gibson roared up on the motorbike, stopped and shouted for Hawn to get on. The women and I chatted and smiled in the background, clinking our glasses as if we were celebrating something. Suddenly Badham, the director, shouted, "Cut! You two in the background! No clinking of your glasses!"

OPPOSITE PAGE | In the movie *Signed Sealed Delivered*.
RIGHT | The author appearing in the movie *Once Upon A Prince*.
BELOW LEFT | A glimpse of the author in *MacGyver*.
BELOW RIGHT | The man in back, appearing in *Bones of Crows*.



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Gibson turned to stare at us without saying a word. His look pretty much said, "Oh great...thanks. Now we have to do that scene again!" Which, of course, we did. Sorry guys — we just thought it looked good. And besides they were only paper cups; there was no sound when we "clinked." I guess the director didn't want any action in the background that might distract the audience from Gibson's performance. There's a lot to learn when you're working on a movie set.

The most fun I ever had was working with Leslie Nielsen. We were filming a scene from the movie *Digger* at Mattick's Farm just outside of Victoria. The designated waiting area for us background performers was in a restaurant.

My scene with Nielsen was in the ice cream parlour at the farm. My role in this scene was very small, even though we were at Mattick's Farm rehearsing for close to four hours by the time we finished shooting the scene.

I had to walk around the ice cream parlour area while Nielsen and Olympia Dukakis (who played his wife) walk up to the counter to order some ice cream cones. In the movie you can make me out in the background, although I'm mostly just a shadowy silhouette.

During our breaks I'd sit at a table with other background performers. Leslie would come and hang out with us — a very unusual thing for a star to do. (Generally, you're instructed not to talk to the stars of the movies unless they talk to you first.)

The man was hilarious and had us laughing the entire time. He had an electronic whoopee cushion device that he'd activate when people walked by our table. It emitted a variety of fart sounds. Short ones...long ones...well, you get the idea. It was something none of us would have expected but it was hilarious beyond words. That was a highlight for me - hanging out with a star like Leslie Nielsen. A really nice guy.

These are just a few of the movies and TV shows I've worked on and some of the people I've worked with. I love being a background performer. I love being in front of a camera and I love seeing how movies work from the inside out.

I learn something new on every shoot. Doing this kind of work I've met many wonderful people, some of whom I now consider friends. The background-performer circle is a close-knit little family sometimes.

I'm still active as a background performer after all these years and still love it.

Things have been a little slow this year due to the writers' strike. But I did work in a Hallmark Easter movie. I also recently worked in a yet-to-be-released movie called *An Island Light* in which I play a fisherman. I also worked in the mini-series *Bones of Crows* and a holiday Christmas series, *Holidazed*, due to come out later this year. (I play a store clerk in a men's clothing store in one episode.)

I look forward to getting a call from my agent to let me know I've been hired for yet another movie or TV show.

See if you can spot me in the background... I'm the man in back! |

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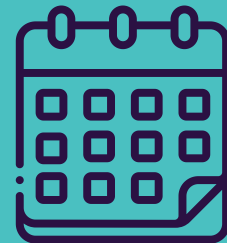
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ACTOR ENRICO COLANTONI: Bridging Social and Generational Divides

by JONATHAN LEE

Veteran actor, Enrico Colantoni gives us cause to consider optimistic possibilities, even when it comes to police stories.

Starring in the new CBC TV drama series, *Allegiance*, that premiered on February 7th on CBC Gem and CBC TV, Enrico's character, Vince Brambilla, a veteran police training officer, provides an opportunity for viewers to look at how police services can adjust to current community needs.

This includes the generational and cultural divides that intersect police interactions, among its members and with the public.

Enrico's character is teamed with an idealistic rookie officer, Sabrina Sohal, played by Supinder Wraich, as she enters the reality of community policing. She is a stellar police academy graduate with an exceptionally challenging and unique family background.

The series, set and filmed in Surrey BC, tracks the often-dubious traditions of the fictional Canadian federal police corps.

There is possibly no better actor than Enrico to assume the role of veteran officer Vince Brambilla. Social policing responsibility is very much an underlying theme of *Allegiance*, and Enrico is very much an actor with a social conscience.

Enrico is a native of Toronto, the son of Italian immigrants. His brother, Hector, is a retired detective sergeant with the Toronto police. No stranger to police culture in real life, Enrico jokes that he's always been the recipient of unsolicited advice in his preparation for police character roles.

TV cop stories are always "science fiction" to him – never describing real world policing but still valuable in raising questions and awareness of how the interactions of police and community can be improved.

Enrico describes his character as a little jaded and a little tired but who still believes a broken police system can evolve, move forward, grow, and learn with society.



He says *Allegiance* is "a beautiful show that tackles crime events, social events, racism and indigenous issues where lines are often blurred."

He believes TV has the opportunity to "imagine a world better than the world we live in."

A long list of career credits demonstrates the depth of Enrico's acting career and shines a light on the value of extensive experience in any career.

He marks his 61st birthday soon and is conscious he's entering the 'senior' stage of an acting career that spans 40 years.

Enrico is a man looking to improve future possibilities rather than bask in past successes.

He would like to see a movement away from entertainment and media narratives that reinforce negative realities, toward more optimistic and solution-oriented thinking.

ABOVE | Enrico Colantoni.
Photo courtesy of Enrico Colantoni

LEFT | Enrico and his co-star Supinder Wraich from their new CBC show called *Allegiance*.
Photo courtesy of CBC / Lark Productions / Darko Sikman



Enrico believes the storyline of a police series, such as *Allegiance*, can serve as an opportunity to show that, while we must acknowledge the significant distrust in broken social and police systems, there can be a more optimistic narrative.

“*Allegiance* does a great job of building a generational bridge,” he says, combining the benefits of senior and learned experience with the optimism of youthful idealism.

His hope is that a time will return where young people will “aspire to careers in policing and where police morale can be lifted and police culture can be more engaged with local communities, with mutual trust, properly paid, and given better equipment.”

He believes dramatic productions, like *Allegiance*, can be a bridge, using informed and exciting drama to explain how policing and law enforcement can be a positive service for society.

As for the experiences of the ‘aging actor’ – not a welcome term for Enrico – it was an opportunity to emphasize that he loves his work and continues to feel “young at heart.”

He mentions the energy, skill and experience that older actors such as Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen and many more, continue to bring to stage, film and the performing arts.

Still, role opportunities are competitive for older actors.

“Younger audiences watch younger characters,” he says.

Whether on stage or filming, many acting roles require extraordinary stamina. The physicality of “chasing the bad guys” was easier 13 years ago, he jokes.

Looking ahead, Enrico is enthusiastic to talk about his part in *The English Teacher*, a new FX comedy series set in a Texas high school. Enrico plays the school principal, with Brian Jordan Alvarez playing a gay English teacher. Set in Austin, Texas, the series explores the changing rules and expectations of parents, students and school administration in today’s confusing social environment.

Returning to Canada, Enrico happily

mentions the current light-hearted Crave comedy series, *The Trades*, in which Enrico plays a crew member working at a refinery in Nova Scotia – demonstrating how broad his acting range is, from *Macbeth* to a comedic refinery worker, from a veteran police officer to a Texas high school principal.

Enrico’s path inspires the idea that the ‘senior’ years can be the most productive and original.

He remains very much an ‘in demand’ working actor and sees no reason why age should reduce his contribution to the world of performance arts.

Enrico’s ongoing success also enables his charitable priorities.

He’s a long-time supporter of Boots on the Ground, arising from his fraternal and acting connections with law enforcement.

Boots on the Ground is a helpline providing confidential and anonymous peer support 24/7 to First Responders across provinces. It is a charitable organization completely run and staffed by volunteers.

Enrico is also a committed supporter of animal welfare, including where companion animals can provide comfort and trauma recovery possibilities.

Becoming a ‘senior’ in his profession will be a new tool in his resource kit.

Through his future performances he’ll be a positive and inspirational energy for audiences for many years to come. |

Enrico’s prior TV and film roles include portraying Elliot DiMauro in the sitcom *Just Shoot Me*, Keith Mars on the television series *Veronica Mars*, Louis Lutz on the short-lived sitcom *Hope & Gloria*, crime lord Carl Elias on *Person of Interest*, and Sergeant Greg Parker on the television series *Flashpoint*. He has also had supporting roles in such films as *The Wrong Guy*, *Galaxy Quest*, *AI Artificial Intelligence*, *Contagion*, and *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, and guest appearances on *Monk*, *Numb3rs*, *Party Down*, *Stargate SG-1*, and *Bones*. More recently, he starred as Allen Conner in *Remedy*. He played Laura Hollis’s father in season three of the online web series *Carmilla*. He appeared in HBO’s *Westworld* revival and in *Station Eleven*. Enrico directed two episodes of the TV series *iZombie*.

Enrico has an illustrious theatre background, graduating from the Yale School of Drama, where he received their prestigious Carol Dye Award. His theatre credits include the premiere of Neil LaBute’s *The Distance From Here* at the Almeida in London, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the New York Shakespeare Festival’s Delacorte Theatre in Central Park, *Arabian Nights* at the Manhattan Theatre Club, *The Triumph of Love* at the Guthrie Theatre and *Dracula* at San Diego’s Old Globe Theatre. He also played the title role in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* at the Matrix Theater and *Uncle Vanya* at the Lillian Theatre in Los Angeles.



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Chasing Air and Water

by MIKE POSER

We call ourselves the Geezer Kayak Club. We are actually a small group of “sixty-something” river kayakers who have been paddling together for over thirty years - a minor miracle in a high attrition sport like whitewater kayaking.

By late August, the rivers around Vancouver shrink to a trickle, so we have to travel to find runnable rivers. Last summer, we headed for the Cariboo. The town of Likely, B.C. felt like a good destination; far enough north to escape the wildfire smoke that was plaguing southwestern B.C., and near enough to the confluence of two large and flowing rivers to make the trip worthwhile. The most important thing to a kayaker, after breathing, is an abundance of water!

Likely is a seven hour drive up-province from Vancouver. I start to doubt our plan when, passing through 100 Mile House, the sun was still a glowing red orb in a very smoky sky.

By the time I reach Likely, the veil of smoke is finally behind me. It is raining lightly now.

“Downtown” Likely is essentially The Likely Lodge Pub. I step inside, wondering how the town came by its



odd name. A wall plaque says it is named for John “Plato” Likely, a local philosopher/pro prospector fond of quoting Plato and Socrates, and a beloved friend to the early settlers.

The ghost town of Quesnel Forks is a few kilometers down the road from Likely. It sits at the confluence of the Cariboo and the Quesnel Rivers. Our group is camping at the forestry rec site there.

The Forks have a deep history, originally as a First Nations gathering place and then as the fastest growing gold rush era colony. Today all that remains are a few log structures open to the public to explore, and a cemetery. Folks still pan for gold along the rivers here, but the real wealth is the region’s history and the characters, like John Likely,

who once made it thrive.

That night, a string of thunderstorms and torrential rain hits us hard. I get little sleep, dodging the trickles of water dripping into my tent. Wherever I move my head, the water droplets conspire to find me. But I don’t mind because the river levels are low this year and all this water will surely bring them up.

The skies clear the next day, and we consider our options. The Quesnel is the more exciting run, but we aren’t keen to paddle its scary “Devils Eyebrow” drop without our most experienced paddler, Ray, to guide us. He is still enroute. So, we opt to do a run down the kinder Cariboo River instead.

The Boo is easy to access, and it turns out to be a fun, yet serene, Class III (Intermediate) run on a remote stretch of water. We take-out right at the campsite.

River runners are nomads at heart. We break camp the next day and head 250 kms west to Taseko Junction, on the Chilko River. The drive west along Highway 20 from Williams Lake is ruggedly spectacular as it ascends into the Chilcotin Plateau. The land here is wide open and it feels different. I get a sense of leaving one world and entering another. We are now in Tsilhqot’ in First Nations territory.



ABOVE | Colin “The Beast” shreds a surfing wave below Bidwell.

LEFT | Chilko and Taseko Confluence

I perch my tent on a plateau overlooking the confluence of the Chilko and the Taseko rivers. The Tsilhqot'in name for this area is "Elhixidlin", loosely meaning "where the rivers meet". The Chilko's clear blue water and the milky glacial Taseko mix in a slow-motion swirl of color. I am hypnotized by it. Bald eagles soar overhead. This place is spiritual.

Trip organizer Ray likes to wake up late, so the next day the Chilko crew gets to sleep in. The crew, besides Ray, includes Colin, who excels at so many different adventure sports we nickname him "The Beast", adventure-seeking Deanna, a recently empty-nester mom descending the Chilko for her first time, and Dan, the canoeist and wilderness gourmet chef.

Colin, Dan and Deanna are too young to be fellow geezers. No matter, we welcome them to our group a few decades early.

The highlight of the Chilko is the White Mile. It's an internationally renowned stretch of Class IV (Difficult)

whitewater, notorious for its length and huge crashing wave trains. It is well outside my comfort zone, so I elect to sit this run out. Fellow paddlers Lloyd and Kathleen likewise. We help to support the group by running shuttle.

At this point, our adventure paths fork. The four kayakers set out on the river while Lloyd, Kathleen and I hike down toward the river's edge, seeking to catch up with the boaters mid-run to get some action photos.

Lloyd cautions us that we are in prime grizzly bear terrain here. I vol-

unteer that I have bear spray in my day pack.

"In that case, you go first," they exclaim in unison.

Oops.

We aim for Bidwell Canyon, the entry rapid to the White Mile. The trail is non-existent, and we end up on a Class IV bushwack through a steep-sloped wildfire burn, choked by fallen trees. We finally emerge, scraped and soot-blackened, downstream of Bidwell, wondering if the river route would have been safer after all!



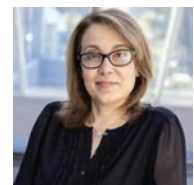
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TOP LEFT | Dan showing his skill with a wok.

BOTTOM LEFT | On the way to the put-in: Ray viewing the exit of the White Mile.

BELOW | Deanna powers through the deep turquoise waters heading into the White Mile.



We do not spot any bears but we do see plenty of fresh scat. So maybe the bears are actually watching us.

Bidwell has huge haystack waves, and the cleanest route is guarded by semi-submerged boulders. Paddlers must execute well-timed moves to run through it safely.

Bidwell was the site of a tragic rafting accident back in 1987 which claimed the lives of several prominent American businessmen. The story was made into a (forgettable) film called *The White Mile*, starring Alan Alda. That event remains very much part of the Chilko river lore.

We finally intersect with the boaters below Bidwell, just above the White Mile. All is well. There were no incidents in the tough water upstream. We get some photos and then the adventurers continue down into the White Mile and through to the take-out at our Taseko Junction campsite.

That evening, Dan cooks up a gourmet Pad Thai dinner using his three-burner camp stove and wok. Dan is an engineer, but in his camp kitchen he moves with the precision and skill of a professional chef. The result looks and smells delicious – especially compared to our lazy meals of pasta and canned heat-ups. We tease him endlessly of course, ruining our chance of getting an offer to share in his masterpiece. Later, Dan kindly cooks up a big batch of wok-popcorn for the whole crew to enjoy.

Our Taseko Junction time is too soon over and the group packs up for the return trip to the coast.

We return via Lytton for a final all-level group paddle down the lower Thompson River. At the take-out, we are back into the smoke. Breathing leaves a bad taste. We are missing the North already.

I arrive back in Vancouver, energized by my time on the river. We found air. We found water.

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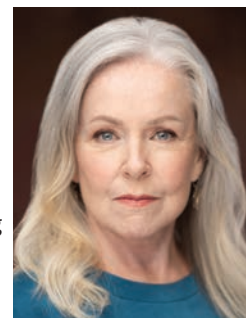
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4 ways to reduce your risk of developing dementia

by Tom Arnold, Executive Director, Eldercare Foundation

We all want to live long and healthy lives. While Canadians are living longer than ever, dementia and other chronic illnesses are on the rise.

While some dementia risks are difficult or impossible to change – such as your age and your genes – there is a lot of evidence that making healthy lifestyle choices can affect your risk of developing dementia.

Here are 4 ways to reduce your risk of developing dementia:

- 1. Be active.** Being physically active can reduce risk factors for dementia such as depression, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol. If you're not currently active, be gentle and set realistic goals such as walking instead of driving, or using the stairs versus the elevator. Once you get moving, aim for 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week. There is no shortage of options for locals in Greater Victoria with many seniors enjoying hiking, lawn bowling, pickleball, or dragon boat paddling.
- 2. Be social.** Combining social interaction with physical activity is a great way to bolster your brain health. Research shows that forging and nurturing social connections may help reduce your risk of developing dementia. Some ideas for building and expanding your social network include participating in a service club, volunteering at a local charity, joining a book club, or singing in a choir.
- 3. Challenge your brain.** While engaging in physical and social activities can reduce your risk of developing dementia, keeping your brain fit can also slow the decline of your cognitive abilities and maintain your memory functions. Challenge your brain with games such as puzzles or crosswords. Studies have shown that playing video games with 3D environments, such as Super Mario, can result in improved memory and executive function.
- 4. Manage your stress.** Stress is all too common, but when it persists, chronic stress can cause damage to your brain. Finding ways to lower your stress can improve your brain health and reduce your risk of dementia. Getting a good night's sleep – at least seven hours per night – is one way to protect your memory and brain function. You can also consider stress-reducing techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or a long walk in nature.

In addition to these simple steps, be sure to take advantage of local services geared to helping you maintain your mental and physical abilities as you age. Each month, with support from Eldercare Foundation, the **Yakimovich Wellness Centre** provides free workshops designed to increase your knowledge so you can better navigate your health and aging journey.

Find out more:

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Bloom by Bloom, Step by Step

by DORIS VON TETTENBORN

The ruins of my garden had been visible from the deck for some time, but I had not yet ventured outside. It was time to get out there and acknowledge the ravages of time and neglect, weep, and get to work, as my grandma used to say, to formulate a rebuilding plan.

The flower and vegetable gardens had been my project for years. My husband managed the lawn, the best lawn in the neighborhood, lush, dark green and weed free. He took great pride in his lawn, had many tools, such as an edge trimmer, and kept it immaculately groomed.

But he wasn't a gardener.

When I got sick, the gardens languished. I was too sick to notice at first and when I noticed, I was too sick to care. By the time I cared, I was still too weak to get out there. By then, the flowers had languished to death.

Now I had to scope out the extent of the damage and plan my next steps. I had 30 feet of flower gardens and as much again of vegetable gardens. I started on the flowers – beauty, a balm for my soul.

I stepped into our backyard for the first time in a very long time. The day was warm and sunny. While visions of previous blossoms floated by my mind's eye, tears blurred the real view, the neglect, the destruction. I knelt in the grass beside the garden with a wrought iron bird bath in the centre and leaned into the dirt. How I loved my dirt, the smell of it, the feel of it.

I loved how some remnants of perennials had managed to hang on by the tip of their roots, tiny bits of green poking up among mounds of brown and yellow dead foliage. I loved how the tiny red roses, even though long dead, resembled dried flower bouquets.

The beauty of the dead and dying plants struck me with awe. Though some flowers had grown past their usual life span, and even though no one had pruned them, wild, spindly, shaggy bits had gone to seed. Scraggly shapes and colors swirled around each other, roped together by errant vines.

What had looked like a mat of greens, yellows, and browns was beautiful – a montage of nature taking care of itself, seeding, dying, going dormant, germinating again, against all odds, in the spring, fighting for sun, rain and nutrients. They had climbed around each other, sharing resources and, in the end, died together.

Was there any beauty left in my body and soul, matted down by years of chronic fatigue, pain, fighting for breath, struggling to stay alive? Just as surgery had saved my life, surgery was now going to save my gardens.

I grabbed gloves, pruning shears, trowel, shovel and a trash bin. I debated pruning around surviving remnants, but not knowing the chance of survival of plants that had gone 3 years without food and water, other than what the soil and rain had provided in my absence, I held my breath and started ripping.

I ripped out plants by the roots and tossed them in the bin. Ripped and ripped, tears dripped.

I didn't realize how much I loved and missed this garden, and the act of gardening until it died, and I had to start over, rebuilding from the dirt up.

Life imitating life. I didn't appreciate my health until I lost it and had to start over.

I ripped out the first flower garden. I had several, with themes. A birding garden, fairy and butterfly garden, and the farmyard, complete with a big red barn.

I could take only so much destruction. Soon I cleaned and put my tools away for another day. My heart jumped at the view from the deck – a clean, empty black dirt, a blank canvas. I grinned and planned a trip to the greenhouse.

The next morning, my husband drove us to Garden Scents, just out of town on a narrow gravel road. I jumped out of the black Sante Fe and grabbed a large cart. He raised his eyebrows but didn't say a word. Kid in a candy store, I zoomed up one aisle and down the next.

"Do you know what you are looking for?"

"I'll know it when I see it." I grinned, barely looking his way. "I need to see everything before I decide."

The perfume of thousands of flowers, the scent of the dirt, the instant

dopamine surge. I grew up on a farm. Planting and weeding were in my blood. As a teenager I had resented time spent in the gardens and fields. I wanted to read, write, be by myself. Forty years later, I could hardly wait to get back to the dirt.

My stomach was pinched, like first love. Pansies, little purple faces smiling, petunias, gorgeous pink petunias, white bacopa, purple lobelias, curvy ivy, my cart – my heart – was overflowing.

Again, the raised eyebrow. I paused, he smiled and nodded. I, tears threatening, leaned in for more. I stopped when the color and texture of the many plants I had chosen were spilling over the cart. I bought far more than I needed for the small space I had cleared the day before. Certainly more than I would have the energy to plant.

“I can help you,” my husband said on the drive home. “I just wanted to make sure you were truly ready to do it this time.” He glanced over at me, eyes immediately back on the gravel road. “You’ve gone out there a couple times over the years but came back in almost immediately.”

It wasn’t the first time he had told me something I had no memory of. The memories were frail, as if I had been in a walking coma the previous years, bits and pieces floated by, difficult to grasp.

“I didn’t want us to start and then let it die again. I don’t love your gardens enough to do it on my own.”

I laughed. Never a more obvious statement uttered.

Later, I placed flowers, still in their pots, in various arrangements in the birding garden with its wrought iron bird bath, swinging old wooden cabin bird feeder, and the large, turquoise condo bird house. I heard my husband ripping out weeds and detritus in the fairy garden nearby. I winced but didn’t look up. He had been nervous until I told him, “Don’t worry about identifying anything, just dig it all up.” We both knew he didn’t know petunia from clover, a rose from thistle.

When I was satisfied with the arrangement, I left the pots in the spot

where I wanted the plants to live, and my husband dug the holes. He finished and left the rest to me and my sensual delights, sitting next to my plants, settling them in with food and water, patting the dirt, soothing the plants with my voice, and in the process soothing my soul.

“I’m going to take you out of your pot, give you a beautiful place to live, lots of love and food and water.”

My husband had joked that plants don’t talk back, but I know they do.

Over the spring and summer, we were in the garden almost every day. The bird garden was glowing with soft pinks and purples, dotted with white. The fairy garden twinkled with pink and muted blues, purple cornflower for the butterflies, an occasional blaze of red. The toy farm with its big red barn, a rock path to the fields, one side green thyme ground cover, for the hay field, yellow ground cover on the other side for canola. Joy and exhaustion in my eyes, fingers and bones.

After the flowers we tackled the vegetable garden. My husband turned

the soil over with a shovel. After a few days grunting with that task, he bought a handheld rototiller.

Weeks later, the flowers were spectacular, hanging purple fuchsias dripping into climbing pink roses, purple lobelias creeping into lawn territory, risking their necks to the lawn edger. My stamina increased over the days and weeks, digging in the dirt, pruning, humming, weeding, until once again, the gardens were almost completely my domain.

By summer’s end, the vegetables were ready to harvest – baby potatoes, sweet carrots, crisp green beans and fresh sliced tomatoes. We savored the first taste of steamed baby potatoes smothered in butter.

Sweet moment. Nothing ever tasted as sweet as vegetables grown in our rebuilt gardens.

Life reflecting life. Nothing ever felt as sweet as recovered strength and stamina in my rebuilt body.

I breathed new life into the garden. The garden answered back, breathed new life into me. |

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The Spirit of Bella Coola

by LINDA BLAIR

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Heading out on a road trip in early autumn certainly has its merits. The brilliant fall colors, the fresh scent of the forest, and the light touch of an autumn breeze combined with the warm caress of the sun tell me this will be a road trip to remember.

Highway 20 into the Bella Coola Valley is definitely a road less travelled, however, the stunning views are extraordinarily spectacular and certainly worth the drive. Alpine lakes, dramatic mountain peaks and fascinating natural wonders are unforgettable.

Driving to Bella Coola quickly became one of my most notable road trips. What began as a trip to see grizzly bears in the wild, soon became a journey of discovery.

Upon arrival, I already felt something was different. Little did I know how much of an impact this experience would have on me.

Considered to be one of the oldest human settlements ever found in North America, Bella Coola dates to the last ice age. A rich cultural history, totem poles, and centuries old petroglyphs,

all tell ageless stories of struggles and survival. With such deep layers of history, the Bella Coola Valley is definitely a place where the past whispers to you.

Within this valley, lies a pristine Pacific coastal rainforest, known as the “Great Bear Rainforest,” considered to be one of the world’s largest temperate rainforests. Measuring 6.4 million hectares, this incredibly varied and rugged terrain is home to deer, wolves, cougars, mountain goats, black bears and grizzlies.

Inside this mystical forested area, you’ll find towering thousand-year-old red cedar, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, and carpet-thick moss-covered ground. Combined with salmon-rich rivers and meadowed lowlands, this creates the ideal environment for grizzly bears.

Home to some of the world’s largest grizzlies, this remote and unspoiled wilderness allows them to roam, feed, and live undisturbed. People around the world trek here just to catch a glimpse of this scenic area with its abundant wildlife.

The Nuxalk First Nations people of Bella Coola, date back some 10,000 years, so who better to lead me into a sacred and spiritual area hidden in the Great Bear Rainforest, than Lance Nelson, a Nuxalk guide and teacher. I was led to a collection of rock carvings created by Indigenous people in the area, thousands of years ago.

Lance revealed stories behind the figures, depicting legends surrounding the carvings. He labeled the area as “sacred and spiritual” for all. It’s a place where people come during all seasons, including the dead of winter with only



the light of the moon to illuminate the trail. A shroud of mystique and spiritual power enveloped us as he sang a traditional Nuxalk song of welcome.

The whole Bella Coola Valley is drenched in history, and a short ten-minute boat ride from the wharf in Bella Coola, took me across the inlet to Tallheo Cannery, built in 1916.

Disembarking at the Tallheo dock, felt like stepping through a time warp. Bursting with nostalgia, the guest house, general store and surrounding structures, including the cannery,

complete with a decaying boat tilted on its side at the shoreline, had me spellbound.

In its heyday, Tallheo Cannery rocketed to nearly 300 people including the workers’ families. Most lived on the property in bunkhouses or cabins. Typically, the men fished, and women worked in the canning division or mended fish nets.

1948 saw a decline in the canning industry when improved refrigeration and transportation became more readily available. Tallheo survived by op-

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erating as a net loft, machine repair station, fuel dock — and kept the general store open. More than a century later, the guest house continues to operate during the summer months.

Another ten-minute boat ride across calm waters brought me back to Bella Coola and reality.

My excitement and anticipation for a morning on the Atnarko River in search of grizzly bears was about a level 10 when I arrived at the launching area. After a ten-minute safety talk with the river guide, we climbed aboard the inflatable raft and began our slow drift downriver. Immediately, I was

PG 22 | The Tallheo Cannery

PG 23 | Nuxalt guide and teacher Lance Nelson

ABOVE | A feeding grizzly bear enjoying a cool plunge

RIGHT | Nuxalt totem carver Alvin Mack was raised in Bella Coola and is mentor to many young artists.



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awestruck as my eyes swept across the rugged beauty of the surrounding mountains. This meandering 100-km long river is definitely one that weaves people and nature together.

Occasionally, an assault on the nostrils by the heavy, rancid, tang of rotting fish in the air causes one to wince. However, my excitement rises and I completely forget about the odor when the first grizzly comes into view, casually nosing on the fatty flesh of a salmon.

This viewing corridor is a favored location for grizzlies to gorge themselves on five varieties of salmon. The guide outlines the various species, identifying the prized chinook as having the highest fat content. Often the bears will only eat the center of the fish for the eggs (highest content of nutrients). However, as the fish dwindle in numbers the bears become less picky and will even eat the dead ones.



Curious about the impact of tourism on the bear population in this area, the guide reasoned the overall effect was positive because larger dominant male grizzlies tend to shy away from humans. They find other avenues to feed on spawning salmon. As a result, sub-adults and especially females with cubs, have easier access to prime feeding spots in this busy corridor. Males are known to kill infant cubs, so females with cubs would have a more difficult time to feed without human presence.

Strict rules are enforced in order not to disturb the bears while they are fishing. Vessels are required to stay at a minimum distance at all times; absolutely no aggressive behavior toward the bears is tolerated. Silence is a must, and certainly no food or drinks are permitted. As a result, these grizzlies appear to be unfazed by human presence and simply concentrate on feeding.

A walkabout in the village of Bella Coola is a must to soak in the culture. Publicly displayed are beautifully carved benches, vibrantly painted shelters, and thought-provoking totem poles that tell very compelling sagas. While learning the significance of these poles, it was difficult not to have feelings of sadness swell up, and at times become overwhelmed with emotion.

One totem pole removed from here more than a century ago, was recently (2023) repatriated from The Royal Museum in Victoria, BC. It now sits proudly on display in the foyer of the Acwsalcta School in Bella Coola. Descendants of the original carver still reside in Bella Coola, and have stated “it was like a family member had returned home after a long journey.”

Continuing on my walkabout, it was an honor to be invited into the workshop of Alvin Mack, an accomplished, well respected and talented artist who has won many awards for his Nuxalk artwork. His works are on display around the world and in local galleries in Bella Coola and Vancouver BC.

Alvin describes himself as a “vessel” to teach and bring back the culture of his Nuxalk ancestry by way of translating mythology into his carvings. He explains it is a way to keep the Nuxalk heritage and traditions alive after nearly being extinguished from many decades of suppression.

Greatly inspired by his father, himself a master carver, Alvin began carving at a young age when his father gave him a bar of soap and a knife. That was the beginning.

However, as a young boy, Alvin’s path was long and hard, filled with many ups and downs, sorrow and tragedy. His father was a residential school survivor.

Alvin persevered against great odds to become the man he grew into. Listening to him speak of his life story and all the struggles he endured was very moving. I found Alvin to be a most giving and humble man as he spoke of healing and forgiveness.

Today, life in Bella Coola appears to be focused on reviving the Nuxalk culture, language, customs, and healing.

Many things I discovered on this trip caused me to look inward and reflect upon my own beliefs.


Never would I describe myself as “privileged” because my life has always been a modest one. Simply put, I learned that “privileged” is not just wealth, designer clothes, big houses, and expensive cars. Freedom is one thing I’ve always enjoyed yet took for granted. I now have a broader understanding of “privileged”.

I traveled to this remote area for the amazing scenery and grizzlies. Unexpectedly, I also discovered the Spirit of Bella Coola.

Whether you travel there for nature, tranquility or wildlife, embrace the culture and warmth of the residents.

Listen, learn, and keep your mind open. If you do so, you will understand far more, and perhaps you too will feel the Spirit.


A parting gaze over my shoulder, gave me a final dose of awe I wouldn’t soon forget. |



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FOREVER FIT by EVE LEES

All About Chocolate

Cocoa, the main ingredient in dark chocolate, does offer health-boosting properties for cardiovascular health: flavonoids that help increase blood flow and reduce clotting risk, and procyanidins, which offer an additional anti-oxidant (disease-fighting) effect.

However, although cocoa and dark chocolate are “good” for you, cocoa’s beneficial effects on heart health aren’t significant. You’d likely have to eat a large amount of dark chocolate for more noticeable effects. And cocoa’s health-boosting properties can be found in many other foods – foods that offer far more antioxidants and other nutrients than chocolate. Regular dark or “milk chocolate” bars also contain sugars and fats not needed in excess in a healthy diet (a chocolate lover would not be happy eating plain, unsweetened, or even semi-sweet chocolate!).

Eating small amounts of dark chocolate along with sensible, healthful food choices promises all the benefits a good diet can offer. The occasional treat of chocolate certainly won’t harm you, so don’t feel guilty having a little.

Optionally, you can reap the antioxidant effects of dark chocolate without added sugar or fat, by consuming unsweetened cocoa powder. Combine it with fresh fruit in a smoothie.

Incidentally, milk chocolate and white chocolate contain little to none of the nutritious cocoa beans that dark chocolate is made from. Unfortunately, they both offer the same amount of calories, fat, and sugar as a dark chocolate bar, but without any of cocoa’s healthful properties.

Research shows dark chocolate offers mild health benefits, but they don’t fully understand why chocolate is so highly craved and how it affects our mood. Why would we brave a snowstorm to buy a chocolate bar, but not for carrots?

Obviously, a chocolate bar’s appealing taste is a big factor, likely due to the sugar (a simple carbohydrate) in a typical chocolate bar.

Carbohydrates release serotonin from the brain, a hormone that has a calming effect. This theory seems to make sense because food cravers most often want high-carbohydrate or sugar-rich foods; no one has fantasies about eating unsweetened chocolate.

Whatever may be behind your chocolate cravings, psychologists suggest keeping this in mind: A hug can be as mood-lifting as eating chocolate. |

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

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LIVING ON PURPOSE

by LAURIE MUELLER

Afternoon Tea

It all started in 1840, when Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, couldn't wait for the traditional 8 pm meal, so she started having afternoon tea and sweets at 4 o'clock.

Since my mother bought me my first Royal Albert china cup and saucer and taught me how to make a hot milk cake, I have been hooked on tea parties of all sizes and reasons.

Over the years, I have enjoyed inviting special guests for afternoon tea, but I serve tea at two not four. I've served afternoon tea to celebrate Valentine's Day or for my birthday, and any other reason I can conjure up. My idea came from the Empress Hotel in Victoria and backed up by the afternoon teas at Butchart's Gardens. They both call it High Tea, but English friends tell me High Tea is a labourer's meal and harder than Afternoon Tea.

My menu is fashioned on the traditional Afternoon Tea.

First, scones. My recipe comes from the Best of Bridge Cookbook. In early days I ignored the lemon zest. What possible difference could that make? Oh! Now I know. It's another little piece of magic designed by God to make your palette sing!

Add clotted cream (you can find it in the dairy case of your favourite grocery store) and if my husband has made jam recently, I add that. Otherwise, store bought strawberry (the world's favourite type of jam) or raspberry jam (my favourite) gives a nice finishing touch.

Next course: Finger sandwiches such as egg salad, ham or salmon. I add a plate of fruit for the health conscious.

Then there are the sweet sweets - lemon tarts, a piece of cake, or a selection of cookies.

I make a simpler version for my granddaughter and great granddaughter. We have tea and scones with lots

of jam. It's our special time!

There is some kind of magic that comes from a steamy freshly brewed cup of tea that calms and soothes the most traumatic situations for the drinker. Of course, there are scientific explanations for that, but I like the word 'magic'.

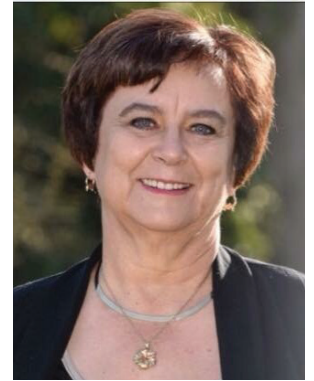
It was Sunday afternoon. My partner and I had a terrible fight. I fled in the car. I found myself in the driveway



of my publisher (yes, even back in the 70's, I had a newspaper column) who always seemed to know the right things to say to boost my spirits. When she saw me in tears at her front door, she pulled me inside and told me she was going to make us tea.

"You will feel so much better after tea and a talk." And she was right. I learned something very important that day about tea. The memory and magic of having a cup of tea, a listening ear, and accepting the wisdom of a friend's words are still with me today.

For the last few years, I have a special afternoon that is booked on-going with a dear friend. We drink tea all afternoon!



Her husband travels through London for his work and my friend and I appreciate the Harrod's tea box he brings home. Afternoon Ceylon, English Breakfast, and Knightsbridge Blend are some of the selections in the box.

Each week a part of the tea magic is to pick the tea we will feast upon.

Now it's time for me to put a fancy tablecloth on my dining room table, add a bouquet of daffodils and pull out the good china cups while I wait for the kettle to boil. I can smell the aroma of freshly baked scones.

Teatime is about to start. Won't you join me? |

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 or on Facebook.

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