

Web of Life

Stories from
Grandview/?Uuqinak'uuh
Adult Writing Group

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For further information regarding this publication, or to find out how to order a copy, contact:

Basic Education Department
Vancouver Community College
P.O. Box 24620, Station F
Vancouver, B.C.
V5N 5T9
Telephone: 604 871-7369
Fax: 604 871-7367

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Adult Writing Group



Some of the writers left to right: (back row) Lydia Francisco, Kari Logue, Jorge Berrios, Mary Chapman, Sally Gellard (front row) Rene Merkel, Moneca Miles, Patty Grah, Priscilla Wells and children from Grandview/Uuqinak'uuh Elementary School

Other writers and story-tellers joined us during our writing sessions and shared their stories and life experiences. Several of these stories are included in this book.

Introduction

"It takes a whole community to raise a child"

This proverb from Africa is one of the guiding principles behind the recent growth and activity going on in the Grandview/ʔUuqinak'uuh Elementary School in East Vancouver. It is our hope that this collection of stories written by adults in the neighbourhood will contribute to the growing spirit of revitalisation within this community.

Web of Life: Stories from the Adult Writing Group has grown out of a partnership between Grandview/ʔUuqinak'uuh School and the Basic Education Department of King Edward Campus, Vancouver Community College. Since January 2001, a group of neighbourhood adults along with instructors, Rene and Sally, have been studying and writing in a small portable that sits in the elementary school's backyard. This classroom is surrounded by a native plant garden, a maple grove and community vegetable plots. Over the spring, we have watched the school grounds transform into a beautiful garden that attracts birds, butterflies, insects and people of all ages.

The gardens and the children playing there have inspired us to retell stories of gardens we have known in our pasts and in our imaginations.

We hope you will enjoy these stories.

Roses and Concrete

There is a poem written by Tupac Amaru Shakur called *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*. It explains that against all odds, the rose still manages to breathe fresh air and walk without having feet.

This is how I see Grandview/?Uuqinak'uuh Elementary School and the surrounding neighbourhood. Who could know that a community filled with poverty and despair could rise above and have, of all things, a garden? Where there used to be concrete, we now have flowers and vegetables. We, the community, are the roses, and the neighbourhood was the concrete.

Don't look at our damaged petals and ask us why. Look at our garden and ask us how. Thank you Tupac for expressing my thoughts in your words.

"Long live the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete."

Kari Logue was raised in East Vancouver. She has two children in Grandview/?Uuqinak'uuh School and she is a huge fan of Tupac Shakur.

The Carrot Story



One warm sunny summer day, we went to visit our Granny, Linda Johnson, in Deroche, B.C. We had arrived just before lunchtime. Our youngsters were hungry for any kind of food they could find. There were a couple of apple trees but the apples were not yet ripe enough to eat.

A big group of us had travelled up the valley in a car and a big van and when we got there, the children were ready to run and climb any tree in sight, searching for the fruit. We walked around our Granny's garden, just looking to see what she was growing. It was a very large garden. For us parents, it was an abundance of free vegetables for our beckoning. My children were able to recognize most of the veggies and were testing them out, dirt and all. All of a sudden my niece, Claudette George, let out a very loud scream. This got all of our attention.

She yelled, "Hey, I found a carrot!" and she raised her tiny arm as high as possible with the carrot dangling from her hand. Everyone's reaction to this was a great roar of laughter.

Claudette had always thought that all veggies came only in plastic bags from the grocery store.

Mary Chapman told this story about her niece, Claudette George, who was 5 years old when this story took place. Mary Chapman is an elder at Grandview/?Uuqinak'uuh School. She loves gardening and growing vegetables for her family.

My Mother's Garden

Back when I was growing up in the interior of B.C., my mom had a very large vegetable garden. It was at the bottom of the hill, away from the house. We lived by a lake and the house was located at the top of the hill. There were three small hills in the area. One hill looked down on the houses. The houses stood on the second hill and the third hill was on one side. On the other side of the third hill was a drop-off going down to a sweat lodge, a water well and the lake. Over by the second hill, you could also get down to the lake. This was the side where we did our swimming. Off to the side of the lake was my mom's garden. It was all swampy and marsh land. It was perfect for growing.

One day, the four of us kids sat on the smallest hill that looked down on the garden. As we sat, we watched my mom weeding and picking what was needed for dinner. When she was finished, she headed back up the hill to the house. We all sat there playing until we couldn't see her head and then we ran down the hill to the garden and picked our favourite vegetables. We went over to the lake to wash our veggies and back up to the trees to eat the prizes we had picked. We had two dogs that would come to get us whenever my mom wanted us, so while we were eating and putting a big dent in our prizes, the dogs came and started pulling at our clothes. In the background, we could hear mom calling us for dinner. We went home and sat down to eat after we had washed up. We ate our dinner, barely finishing it because we were so full.

Mom was never mad at us for raiding her garden. She told us not to indulge in it too much and we never did it again. We all still love vegetables.



Lisa Chapman wrote "My Mother's Garden ". This picture shows Lisa sitting beside her mother's vegetable plot in the community garden at Grandview/Uuqinak'uuh School. Lisa is a very active member of the Grandview community.

Potato Story

In the first six years of my life, before I started school, there weren't many children around my own age. I spent a lot of time with adults. I did many different things with whoever had time to be with me. Across the road lived Fidel Charlie. He had an apple tree close to the road and a big field. Things really didn't grow well in that field, but Charlie decided to plant anyway.

I was watching him dig rows so I decided to find out what he was doing. He was very patient. He answered all my questions. I followed him around and he let me help. While he was digging, he put lumps of horse manure in the ground. Then Charlie dropped bits of potato in the trenches. I was following behind him and I didn't know what the black round things were, so I picked them up and threw them on the road. I don't remember how far we got before he stopped for a little rest, standing, leaning on his hoe, Charlie looked around and he turned to me and asked, "What are you doing" I was smiling because I thought I was helping. "Taking these ugly black things out. It's from the horses, and it's not supposed to be in there." He laughed and then said, 'Those will help the potatoes grow.'" I didn't know that and I offered to put them back, but he said, "No, it's OK " After that, Charlie made sure he told me everything before I could help him plant.

Priscilla Wells lives in the neighbourhood. She remembers this story from her childhood in rural B. C.

Moneca's Story



Moneca Miles, front right side, at home with her siblings in Gowland Harbour; Quadra Island, 1934.

My parents and grandparents were homesteading on Quadra Island during the Depression Years. Quadra is one of the larger islands in the Discovery Island group. It is a short ferry ride across Discovery Passage from Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Campbell River is a drop off point for loggers and fishers on the north coast. A little further up is the town of Port Hardy, a stopping point for cruise ships going to and from Alaska. The highway winds beside the waters of Active Pass, through Seymour Narrows, the dreaded rapids and tide rips, tamed somewhat since the top was blown off the huge undersea pinnacle called Ripple Rock in the 1950's. Many ships and lives were lost there in the past.

We lived on the north end of Quadra at the sheltered bay called Gowland Harbour. The only way in or out was by private boat or trails through the forest and on the beach at low tide. The nearest settlement was at Quathiaski Cove approximately ten miles away, on the side of the island that was directly across from Campbell River. There was a B.C. Packers store at Quathiaski where we went for supplies and to sell fish at the fish barge. That is where I was first introduced to bottled soda pop. I recall Orange Crush in the tall frosted bottles with the bulges on the side, and I thought it was the loveliest

thing I had ever seen or tasted. It was ice cold from being kept on ice, which was used a great deal because refrigeration had not come to the island as yet.

My grandparents' homestead was much larger than my parents' place. They had farm animals, lots of fruit trees and a large garden area, containing many kinds of vegetables, almost any kind you could think of, including huge tomatoes and cucumbers, which we children ate straight from the vine. No one worried about pesticides, as the only thing used in the garden was animal fertilizer. We loved to get into the pea patch, which we were forbidden to do. Occasionally we forgot to close the gate and my grandmother's goat would go in and have a grand feed. Of course we were never guilty. It was the same with the strawberries and raspberries; they drew us like magnets.

One of the children's chores was to collect the eggs from the chicken house, which we dreaded, as quite a number of the chickens did not part with their eggs willingly. They hoped to hatch them into offspring, I suppose. I liked the feel of the warm, brown eggs in my hands. One of my young aunts liked eating the eggs raw, which horrified all the adults, but they ate and immensely enjoyed the raw egg white meringue piled high on top of the lemon pie that my grandmother made on special occasions.

There were dozens of fruit and nut trees on my grandparents' property. Most of these were brought from Vancouver, but several trees were from Kansas City, Missouri, where my grandfather came from. One was a huge walnut tree on which my young uncles liked testing their strength by chinning themselves. They all were involved with the Charles Atlas course by correspondence and each hoped to become a regular Adonis. There were different kinds of fruit trees, including cherry, peach, plum, apple, and quince. The quince made a lovely jelly. We never lacked for fresh vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and eggs. The only things we had to buy were flour, sugar, oatmeal and salt. There was a lot of free food available through work and perseverance, by picking wild plants and berries and by fishing and hunting.

A wild plant that grew in the area and was considered to be very beneficial was Labrador tea, which we called Hudson's Bay tea. First Nations people have taken it for many years for medicinal purposes. I often went with my grandmother to gather the shrubs from a boggy area back in the forest. She tied the stalks and hung them to dry in the rafters and used the leaves as tea. We were given this as a tonic in the winter months. I don't think my parents or grandparents knew of the high content of vitamin C it contained, only that it was good for us. Not much was known about Vitamin C in the thirties.

This all sounds like an idyllic life, but I have left out the never ending but necessary hard work done by the adults. My parents had four children to feed and clothe and my grandparents had ten. My grandmother became a widow in her thirties, when her sons were in their early teens or younger. They had to take over most of the work their father had done. It was a hard life, but there were also many pleasant times with lots of laughter and music. I went back twenty-five years later; the houses were gone except for a few mossy boards, the orchard and trails were overgrown and the fruit trees had gone wild.

But I could almost hear children laughing and calling to each other on the warm summer breeze and my mother calling us in for supper. It seems we only appreciate the early years when we grow old and our thoughts return to the past. I am thankful for the many happy memories I have from those years at Gowland Harbour on Quadra Island.

Labrador Tea

Many wild plants thrive in the coastal areas of B.C. One that was known and used for many years by First Nations people is Labrador tea. The Island Halkomelem people called it, *Me'xwuchp*. It is also known by other names, such as Hudson's Bay tea, James tea and Bog tea. This plant is a member of the Rhododendron family, though often mistakenly listed in the genus *Ledum*. Labrador tea is an evergreen shrub, approximately 1 meter tall, though smaller in the colder regions, having adapted to the harsh growing conditions and fewer nutrients. The plants have a sweet spicy aroma and grow most often in low-lying, boggy areas.



The leaves are leathery, long, rolled under at the sides, and have a fuzzy coating on the underside. The fuzz is glandular hairs, which help the plant to retain moisture and nutrients. The lower branches synthesize the oils responsible for the aroma and medicinal properties of the plants.

The English explorer, Sir John Franklin, and his crew set out for the Canadian Arctic coast in 1845. A year later the ships become ice-bound and 105 men died of scurvy and starvation in the Northwest Passage. During the explorations they had found a dwarf variety of Labrador tea growing on the shore. Had they known of the high content of vitamin C in this plant, it may well have helped them to survive.

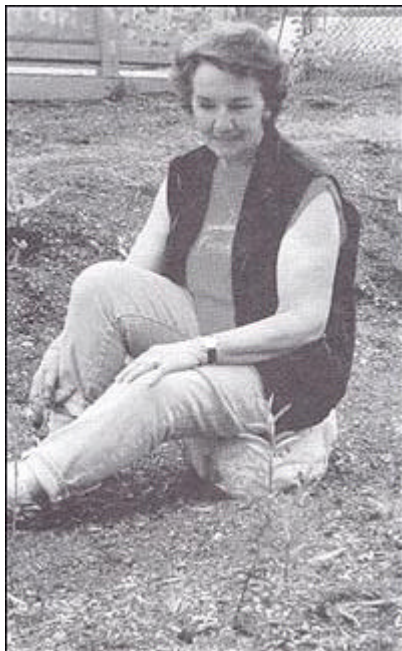
First Nations people made use of this plant in many ways. They used Labrador tea leaves as flavouring for meat. In addition, the tea was helpful in treating wounds and sores because of its high tannin content. The tea was also useful as a drink to relieve pain during childbirth as it has a mild narcotic effect. It was also used as treatment for gastrointestinal problems and for treating coughs. When the Innu people traditionally followed the caribou, their children contributed to transporting the load by carrying dolls stuffed with Labrador tea.

Early European settlers in Canada become aware of the benefits of using Labrador tea and made good use of it. However, they realized that it could not

be ingested in large quantities or too often, and that it was better to steep the leaves rather than boil them.

There are many myths and legends associated with the more toxic variety of Labrador tea growing in parts of Europe. One of these legends concerns ancient Viking warriors called the Beserkas, who had a reputation of being very strong and wild in battle. They were described as being ferocious and fearless, and they terrified their opponents with their cruelty. Their depraved behaviour was thought to be due to intoxication from the variety of Labrador tea growing in that area. A stronger variety of Labrador tea is regarded as an aphrodisiac in Finland and is popularly used to flavour liqueurs there. In Germany and Russia it is used in the making of beer and is believed to enhance the flavour and increase the strength of the beer. They also use this plant in the tanning of leather, and it is so valued it has been featured on postage stamps.

We are fortunate to have such an abundance of edible wild plants growing here on the edge of our rainforests. If we look carefully when we walk on a woodland trail, pass a vacant lot or look in our backyards, we just may see Labrador tea growing there. Pick some leaves, dry them, crush them and make a lovely cup of tea. Enjoy!



Moneca Miles did this research on Labrador tea. She remembers her grandmother picking, drying and serving Labrador tea when she was a little girl. This Picture shows Moneca Miles sitting beside a young Labrador tea plant in the school's native plant garden.

Lydia's Story



I am Lydia Francisco. I came from the Philippines. The Philippines is a poor country, but most of the Filipino people are generous and helpful. I graduated from high school. I couldn't continue to college because my father lost his job, so I needed to help my family earn money.

When I was in high school, I fell in love. After five years of engagement, we married and we have three daughters, Froila, Wilma and Lorna. We helped them finish college. Froila graduated in commerce, Wilma graduated in psychology and Lorna finished economics. All of them are married and have their own families. Wilma, my second daughter, is the one who sponsored me here in Canada. My first days in Canada were

boring because I had no friends to talk with, so I told my daughter I couldn't stay any longer in Canada. I missed my life in the Philippines. After two months back in the Philippines, my daughter called me again and begged me to come back to Canada because she really needed my help. I felt pity for her so I came back. She told me to go out walking so I would not feel bored. I followed her advice and I met many people and they were very friendly to me.

Now I am not bored anymore and I enjoy my life here in Canada. I have been here for almost six years and I am now a Canadian citizen. I enjoy my life in Canada because Canada is a beautiful country and has lots of food. I have many friends now. Canada's government is very good to children as well as to seniors.

This is all I can say about my life.

This story was written by Lydia Francisco who is making her home in the Grandview neighbourhood now.

English Rose



Phyllis Rose Salisbury has lived in the Grandview neighbourhood for the past ten years. This picture shows Phyllis standing beside the Nootka Rose in the flower garden.

I was born in a very small village in England, on a very cold day in February. The first thing I remember is my first day in school. My mother left me at the door and I felt very alone. I soon adjusted and did very well in my school years. At the age of 14, I had finished high school with good grades and could have gone on to further my education, but in those days it was more important to acquire working skills. I went to work in a private school for girls, working in the kitchen. This experience helped me greatly in future years, as I became a short order cook, and worked in many restaurants and hotels.

When I was about six years old, my mother and father used to go to my grandmother's house for Sunday dinner. I had an aunt and uncle not much older than I was, and we all went to Sunday school together, and on the way home one Sunday, I ran across the street to be with my uncle. A car came around the corner and sent me spinning in the road. I remember going to the doctor. I guess I was just shaken up. My father came to get me on his bicycle. The doctor's daughter gave me a real white rabbit to take home with me.

I also got into trouble when I was about nine years old. We used to go into the meadows and collect mushrooms. I must have nibbled on a poisonous one, and later, walking with my mother, I collapsed on the street. I woke up two days later in my mother's bed. I never did find out everything that happened to me, but it was a lesson I never forgot.

Mother's parents, Gran and Granddad, had a small sweet shop in the country. My granddad delivered coal in hundredweight sacks. He brought coal once a week to our house and would give me a ride in his truck to the corner shop, give me a few pennies for sweets and I would walk home. It was something I looked forward to every week.

My summer holidays were spent with my grandparents. I used to weigh out the candies and put them in little paper bags. My grandparents had two huge greyhound dogs, which are racing dogs in England, but these were too well fed to be able to race.

When I was a little older, my grandfather gave me a bicycle on the condition that I learn to fix my own tires and do my own repairs. I did this very well. The bicycle came in handy because I worked in greenhouses that were half an hour ride from home, morning and night. We had quite a large garden when I was growing up. I helped my mother weed and hoe potatoes. We had two pear trees, currant and gooseberry bushes, all kinds of vegetables and a lovely flower garden with a Christmas tree in the middle that my mother planted after Christmas one year. It grew to be a beautiful fir tree. I remember a border of big white daisies. My mother's favourite flower was gladiola. We had snowdrops and crocuses, the first to bloom every year. The garden was shaped like a horseshoe and beautiful climbing roses covered over the front of the house.

When I was 13 years old, the Second World War started, and that began a whole new era in my life. We listened to the radio broadcast of Chamberlain going to Germany to meet with the German leaders and then we heard the frightful news that we were at war. I lived in Burgess Hill, Sussex, on the direct line between Brighton and London, the path that the German planes took to fly over the English Channel to London. We would go out at night and see the flames from the incendiary bombs over London. At that time I was working in the greenhouses and the doodle bugs, the unmanned aircraft, used to come over and we would pray they would keep going because once the sound stopped, it meant that they had dropped and would shatter things for miles around. We had no shelters at the glass greenhouses.

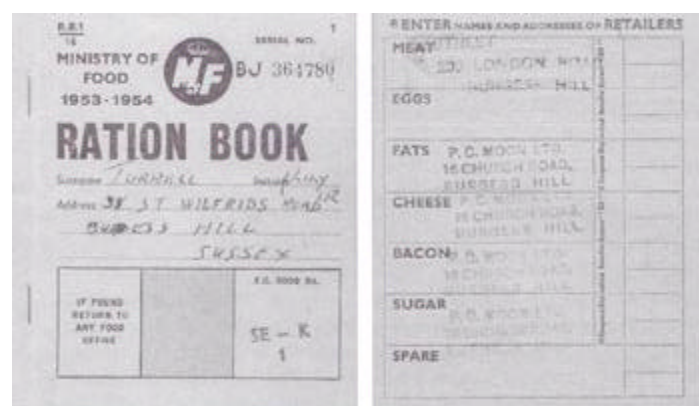
One bomb landed close by, but it was a dud and never exploded. We were very lucky as it was right beside the railway tracks. One Sunday, around noon, my sisters had just left to go to the store, when a German plane on his way back swooped over the town strafing the town with machine gun fire. I was outside and saw the plane so low I could see the swastika on the wing. It went over so fast. My parents were calling for us to get into the shelter that my

father and a neighbour had made for us. It was all over in minutes, and thankfully we were all okay. After that, we had a complete blackout at night. We had to have very thick, dark curtains and not a chink of light was allowed to show from the windows. The home guard went around checking, and they let us know if we had any lights showing. It was difficult to get around at night. It wasn't too bad if the moon was out. On the really dark nights, we had a small flashlight that had to be pointed down at the ground. I bumped into many a brick wall but everyone went about their business as usual.

We had ration books; one egg a week, a small portion of butter, bacon, dried egg powder and clothing coupons. People put advertisements in the paper to sell clothes they did not need, and people would buy them to save their coupons. We also had what we called "sweetie coupons", which we shared when we went to the movies. Those are the only problems I remember in my town, but Londoners really suffered.

There were many Canadian soldiers stationed in Sussex. I met one of them at the movies one day, and at the age of 17, I married him and came to Canada as a war bride on the ship, SS Mauritania. We lived in Ottawa until my first daughter was born, and then moved to Windsor, Ontario and had two more daughters. We moved to Vancouver 12 years ago, and now I have seven grandchildren and eleven great grandchildren. That brings this English Rose up to date.

I have flourished very well in Canada, which shows that you can transplant a rose and it will grow strong and continue to bloom.



This is the ration book used by Phyllis's family after the war. It was used to buy basic food in England when food was scarce.

A Good Decision

When I tried to write about my life, I felt embarrassed because I couldn't understand English well or speak and write it properly. Then I asked myself a question. How will I get out of this darkness and ignorance? I want to know how to have good relations with the community.

I want to be a useful man and do something positive. All this will only be possible if I go to school and I don't care if anybody laughs at me.

Many troubles in my life, yesterday and today, pushed me to improve my education. Watching the movie, "Hurricane", contributed to my determination. This film was made from a book written by Ruby Carter. It is his biography. Carter was in jail for over twenty years, a victim of false accusation. In jail, he studied very hard, and then he published his book. Three young Canadians, one teacher, one accountant, one architecture student and a boy from the U.S.A., Lezra Martin, struggled for a long time to get Hurricane Carter released from jail. Finally he was freed.

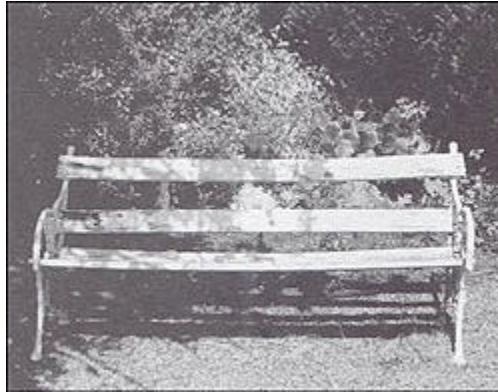
This book helped me decide to go to school, to study with perseverance and to work towards my goal. Education allows us to break the chains that hold us as slaves.

I always remember this wise statement: "A man or woman without an education is like a garden without flowers."

*By Jorge Berríos Pardo
A Chilean boy with 70 years experience*

His Garden

The smell of lilacs permeated the evening air. He lifted his head to look at the lilac trees. "The garden is coming along nicely," he thought as he took his after dinner stroll through the dusk. He anticipated her joining him soon, after she had washed the dishes, put them away and tidied the kitchen. Everything is in place as is her wont.



Her love of order in the house matched his love of order in the garden. He strolled past the lilacs and the rose bushes he had planted those many years ago, just before they had moved into the house. "Those certainly took a lot of care," he said to himself. "She wanted them so, and to please her I took the time and effort to make sure they were healthy." His preference was vegetables not flowers, so he planted vegetables for himself and flowers for her. The results of his efforts lay before him and he felt proud.

The sound of the fountain in the middle of the garden calmed him although he didn't need to be calmed down as often as he once had. In those days he was working during the weekdays, gardening on weekends and being a father and husband all at the same time.

Now that their children had grown up with children of their own, they enjoyed the garden during their visits as much as he did. His thoughts centred on his three grandchildren and the part they played in his enjoyment of the garden these days. He thought about the time he spent with them, playing in the pool and on a swing set he had set up for them. "It's a little chilly," he thought, "I'll sit here on the bench until she comes out. She is bound to bring me a sweater, bless her, she thinks of things like that when I don't." As he thought and dreamed, the love and care he had put into the garden over the years vibrated back at him.

His wife finished the dishes and checked the thermometer. "Old fool, he is out there without a sweater and it's getting cold." She picked up the sweater he had carelessly dropped on a lawn chair beside the back door earlier when the day became warm, and then she walked outside to be with him. She reached out and touched a rose, seeing the beauty, and the flowers tenderly nurtured and cared for over these many years since they bought the house.

"A home to grow in," the advertisement had said, and grow they did, beginning with the two of them, then Bobby, the twins, Mary and Martin, and finally, Sally-Jean. Some days it seemed to be bursting at the seams with family, friends, and activity. She saw the walkway he had designed and built, and the rock garden he had spent many hours creating, where cacti were growing. "How they grow with so little moisture, is beyond me," she thought, "Grow they do, as the result of his green thumb."

Further along she saw his rose bushes. Tenderness for him overcame her. There were lilies of the valley, poppies, hollyhocks, and others she could not name.

"Here's your sweater," she said when she saw him sitting on the bench. She walked over to him and noticed he had not looked up. She reached out to touch him thinking he had fallen asleep, and yes he had, into a sleep from which he would not return, in the place he loved the most.

This story was written by Veronica Hynes



Veronica Hynes grew up in Newfoundland, in a third generation Irish family. She got her love of stories and storytelling around the family dinner table. She began to write in 1994 when she discovered she had a talent for putting stories on paper. Veronica works in the Grandview neighbourhood.

Memoir of a Railroad Worker's Daughter



I grew up and spent my childhood in my hometown, Blue River, right near the beautiful Rocky Mountains. I moved there with my family when I was three years old. My dad worked on the C.N.R., the Canadian National Railway. The trains stopped in Blue River for twenty minutes and there was a little cafe at the station we called "The Beanery". Just across the street from there was one of the two general stores in town. In addition, there was one garage, one post office, one Red Cross outpost hospital with 4 beds and the Blue River Community Hall where all the town activities were held. Also there was one school with 3 classrooms where my dad was school janitor. After we finished as far as we could go in school, we had two choices; either we took correspondence, (school by mail) or we moved out of town to go to school.

We lived in a three-bedroom house on the edge of town. Not far from our house were the railroad tracks. We could see them from our bedroom window. My sister and I used to wave to the train engineers early in the morning when they went by and they always waved back. In those days only some houses in town had indoor plumbing and electricity. The house in which I lived until I was 10 years old had a well outside and a water pump in the kitchen. We used kerosene lamps for light, coal for heat and a woodstove for cooking. At the back of the big old woodstove were five old-fashioned irons that my mother used for ironing our clothes. For bathing, my mother heated up water on the stove and we bathed in a big square laundry tub in the kitchen. And let's not forget the outdoor toilet.

Our mothers didn't have all the modern convenience in those days, such as washers, dryers and vacuum cleaners. Not many houses had carpets; mostly we had throw rugs and braided rugs. Also there were very few telephones,

just maybe four or five in the whole town and no television. Not many homes had radios either. In the community hall, there was a movie every Saturday night, which we all looked forward to. For 25 cents we could enjoy a movie. There was a public health nurse who used to come out to give us shots for childhood diseases. I remember the first time I saw a dentist. I was twelve years old and I needed only three fillings. Some years later, when I was 18 years old and working in Summerland in the fruit cannery, I met up with that same dentist.

My fondest memory was at Christmas time. Each year, the school Christmas concert, in which every child had a part big or small, took place. After the concert was over, we kids on the stage used to stand still and wait for the jingle of the sleigh bells telling us that Santa had arrived. On Christmas Eve, my sister and I would wake up in the middle of the night and we would crawl to the end of bed where we hung our stockings. We would feel the stockings. They were full, so we crawled back under the covers until morning. We always had a beautiful decorated tree with candles on it. We used to go sleigh riding and tobogganing in the winter. My older brother, when he was sixteen, went to work for the sawmill. Later when he was about eighteen, he joined the army. My sisters and brothers started coming along. My mother used to say I was mother's little helper. I helped her with the kids when they were little. When I was about 11 years old, we moved into town, in a house across from the only hotel and just across the street from the school. In this house, guess what? We had running water and electricity. We lived in that house until I was about 14 years old.

My dad was transferred to Kamloops to work on the CNR. So we packed up all our belongings and said goodbye to our friends. As we all got in the car to drive to Kamloops, I took one last look around at the little town I grew up in, which held so many happy childhood memories. I knew I was off to make a new life and new memories in a new city.

I remember the last time I was back to visit Blue River. I was with my mother and Poppa Bob. It was sad to see how much the town had changed during the years I was away. Almost all of the buildings had caved in or crumbled down. The houses looked much older and had an unkempt look about them. Everything had changed and looked different. It was not the town I remembered. There is a ski lodge there now. Houses now have telephones and televisions. The old houses were gone. Some new houses were in their places. Most of all, the families I knew had moved away, so had most of the kids I went to school with. But you know something? I wouldn't have traded anything in the world for having had the chance to grow up in Blue River. And

if I stand still, shut my eyes tight and think really hard, the memories will come back, about how the town used to be when I lived there. Memories are always nice to keep and store away. That is the true story of my childhood in Blue River. I know I was the daughter of a railroad worker.

Patty Grah wrote this story to show us what life was like when she was a child in a small town in the interior of British Columbia.



Patty Grah as a child in her Blue River home.

Stone Soup

This is an old tale from Europe. There are many variations of this story. Here is one of them.

A traveller came into a small village one winter day. She noticed that everyone in the small village was very poor. No one had enough to eat and each person hoarded what little they had. The woman was very tired, so she decided to stay and live in the village for the winter.

One day she began boiling water in a very large pot. She then chose some large stones, and added them carefully one at a time to the pot. One of the villagers came by, and he stood for a while, watching the stranger stir the water. Finally the villager asked, "What are you doing?"

The traveller replied, "I'm making stone soup." Then she added, "But it's still missing something. Would you like to try some?" The villager tasted the soup and agreed. Something was still missing.

"Maybe I could go home and bring you a few carrots to add to the soup," the man offered.

One by one the other villagers came. They watched what the woman was doing, and were curious about the odd soup made with large stones. After a while, each of the villagers offered to bring a little of what they could spare to add to the soup. One brought a few potatoes, another an onion, another a cabbage, and so on until there were many rich and varied ingredients in the soup.

As they waited for the soup to be ready, the villagers gathered together around the pot. They told each other stories and it began to feel like a celebration. Finally the soup was ready and indeed, it was very tasty and there was enough for all. They were nourished by the delicious meal and the teamwork that had made it possible.

The people of the village all agreed, "We shall never go hungry again now that we know how to make soup from stones."



Stone soup in the making

The Cycle of Life

This picture represents the Cycle of Life within the context of the Medicine Wheel. The four directions are represented; East, South, West and North; the four seasons; spring, summer, autumn and winter, as well as the four elements; earth, fire, water and air. The tree in the center represents the Tree of Life and it is surrounded by the Sun. Everything in this picture is organic and biodegradable, and will eventually return to the soil. From a healthy soil, we grow healthy plants, which in turn, provide nutritious food for animals and people. The decaying organic matter in soil is called humus. Humus provides food for macro-organisms; earthworms, beetles, sowbugs, centipedes, millipedes and insects in general. In the final stages of decomposition, the organic matter is broken down by micro-organisms; moulds, mites, bacteria and fungi, until it is fine enough to be absorbed by water. Then this mixture is taken up by the roots of plants to provide them with minerals and nutrients.

To view a larger version (63 k) of the drawing click on the picture below.



The Cycle of Life
by Amy Eustergerling

The Four Seasons

The season of SPRING is shown in the East and is represented by the sprouting of a seedling plant. The seedling needs the warmth of the spring sun and the goodness from the water to begin its growth process. Earthworms, beetles and assorted bugs are hard at work below the surface of the soil. The earth is the element represented by the direction, East. The star of the soil world is the earthworm, which eats mineral and organic matter that it grinds up in its gut. As the worm digs through the soil, it leaves channels, which increase soil aeration and drainage, and encourages deep rooting. Everyday, worms produce their own weight in worm casts, which are highly fertile, containing more nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and calcium than the surrounding soil. The earthworm has been called the intestines of the earth. The living soil is the digestive system of the earth, transforming everything that returns to Mother Earth.

The season of SUMMER is in the South and is represented by nature in full bloom. The element of the South is fire and sun. The rainbow is the promise for the continued fertility of Mother Earth and the bounty of nature.

The season of AUTUMN is to the West. It is the time for reaping the harvest; as the apples on the tree indicate. Also it is the time for making preparations for winter and the storing of food. Notice the nuts the squirrels are gathering to store for winter. The picture shows the rabbit in his den. The holes help to aerate the soil and hold water. Autumn is the time when the leaves fall and the seeds and nuts are distributed. The leaves will decompose and provide nutrients for the soil. Autumn is the time for the snow geese to make their annual migration to the south. The element that represents the West is water, the lifeblood of Mother Earth.

The season of WINTER is in the North. This is the quiet time when the snow covers the earth like a blanket. The seeds rest over the winter in preparation for the growth that will take place in the springtime. In the North, the macro-organisms, as well as the micro-organisms, slow down their activity. The element for the North is air. The sacred circle of life goes on.

The Cycle of Life picture illustrates the interdependence, co-operation and co-existence that exist in the natural world. Everything in nature is connected and works together to maintain harmony and balance.

The Cycle of Life drawing and this explanation comes to us from elder, Amy Eustergerling, a friend of Grandview/!Uuqinak'uuh School.



RETURN



Hummingbird Butterfly Transformation
Stirling Falls,
D.C.