

LOVING LARGE, living small – March 2018 – Seaside Magazine

“We ARE the Village”

In January, shortly after my writing about living alone versus sharing a home, I was pleased to learn that Britain has appointed a Minister for Loneliness “to tackle the isolation felt by more than one in ten people in the UK.” At home here in Sidney, I continue to do my research, hoping to discover best practices along with what to avoid, as our family builds a shared vision for our cohousing adventure.

Fortunately, we have some great examples of communal living here on the Island. On the Peninsula, Tracy Mills and Barb Whittington, have helped found the cohousing initiative *Ravens Crossing* (formerly Saanich Peninsula Cohousing), a wonderful and welcome introduction to the dynamic and collaborative process that creates intentional community. Their initiative will bring together a collection of 25+ creatively designed apartments whose owners have set their sights on building connection, looking forward to the privacy and equity of owning their own homes, while enjoying all that communal living offers; common spaces for gathering, a workshop and garden as well as joint ownership of whatever they decide upon as a group. Add to this, an ease of living that comes from the mutual friendship and support of others and you have the beginnings of a successful endeavour.

As Tracy reminds us, while this concept may be new to many, it’s old news in Denmark, where in 1972, *Saettedammen*, the world’s first recognized cohousing community, opened its doors. Like the Danish, Tracy and Barb’s group recognizes the social benefits of member designed and developed cohousing where as Tracy states “you can enjoy independent living; “privacy when you want it, connection when you need it.” For Barb, that lifestyle “includes a more vibrant, environmentally responsible community with different ages and different interests.” www.ravenscrossing.ca

For Susana Michaelis, coming home to Nanaimo’s *Pacific Gardens* was eleven years in the making, but worth the wait to turn the key on her dream of creating an intentional, resident-planned sustainable housing development. In 2009, situated on 4.37 acres of natural beauty, this cohousing project welcomed families with a focus on community, cooperation, fun, and quality of life. In addition to living in their private and personal homes, these neighbours jointly enjoy a large common kitchen, dining hall and activity space that features a children’s play area, crafts room, music/meditation room, and conversation lounge. They also share an office, elevator,

woodworking shop, laundry, guestrooms, exercise room, storage and organic gardens. Nine years on, Susana and her neighbours continue to embrace connection and welcome visitors to their Thursday community dinners. <http://pacificgardens.ca>

With such great examples leading the way, our family will move our communal planning forward by marrying the best of what we have learned from others with what we have discovered together; that a sense of humour is necessary, that the whole is often better than the sum of all of our individual parts, and that while we have always believed 'it takes a village', we have now come to understand, that we ARE the village.

** Join Linda bimonthly, as her family designs a plan to share a life which includes listening to their land and to each other, introducing themselves to the place and the people, and eventually living a communal future in Shirley, BC.*