

LOVING LARGE, living small – May 2018 – Seaside Magazine

LISTENING to the Land

From the time we are young, much of our path is laid out for us with many of the early decisions made on our behalf. We follow the direction that others send us in, listening to those around us and taking guidance from those who are older and perhaps wiser. We are shaped by the advice we are given, the messages we are sent, the fears that are encouraged.

As we age and grow, our lives may take us in new and different directions as we face forks in the road along with exciting prospects and unforeseen challenges. Some of us choose the road less traveled, while others prefer to wind their way down a well-worn path. Either way, we are seldom faced with the opportunity to blaze a new trail.

For our family, that is exactly what lays before us as we lean into the idea of a communal future; building homes and adapting to existing habitats. With ten acres of land, much of it covered in foliage and small trees, we are left with the decisions around how best to find our way forward. With no obvious paths or developed trails, and with time on our side, we are mapping out our own future, making collective decisions as to which direction to go in, both figuratively and literally.

As a group, we have chosen to move slowly and tread lightly, intently listening to the land. We have unrushed conversations and make lists. On weekend visits, we intuitively walk the property with an eye to preserving what we can. Instinctively, we make our way around the trees that already have a firm grip, sweeping past existing shrubs and carefully stepping over flowers. We take out stumps and fill holes that could cause harm and we move through our new property, letting the land show us the way. With a vision of living and dying here, we carve out paths as we go along, winding our way through this beautiful space, and reminding ourselves of our vision and the important answers, “what kind of life we want here”, “how much space we really need”, and “how we honour those who came before us and plan for the generations to come”.

Among the dreams we are well aware of the practicalities. This is a different way of life for us and it requires a fresh approach. There are bylaws and bears to consider. There are budgets that will dictate decisions, and there is the ongoing awareness that we will all live and support each other, together in one space. We gather information, recording our thoughts in a communication book, noting weather and temperature patterns, which way

the winds blow, and where the sun sets. We remain curious, writing down ideas along with discoveries and heeding the wisdom of our neighbours, who have spent more time here and are eager to share their lessons.

In the end, we will make the final decision on where to plant ourselves, based on all the information gathered and while doing our best to be good stewards, respecting the land, and taking only what we truly need.

** 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.*