

A Cabin in the Woods

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Image: *A Cabin in the Woods ('Lyle and Owen's Cabin' by Debbie Reusch)*

We've really done it now! The reality came home with a shock that left me feeling momentarily breathless, slightly panicky, elated, and excited all in the same instant. I was handing over the keys to the Creag Faoiltiarna Fitheach, our home for the past ten years.

What brings people to the “tipping points” in their lives, to their times of transition? For us, it was the gradual awareness over the past several years that the life we were leading was an illusion, a game of pretend as we and others avoided accepting the true reality of our situations.

I think it is easier to say words like “climate change”, “economic instability”, “peak oil”, “environmental damage”, “inequality”, and “injustice” than it is to actually do something meaningful about these things on a personal level. We humans like to take group action, but when faced with choices that have impacts on our personal lives, we start saying words like “jobs”, “security”, “family”, “money”, and ultimately end up saying “I can’t ...”. For us, “I can’t” became “I won’t” when we started refusing to do work that would further damage our environment and our communities. However, in today’s world, refusal to do work for which you are qualified, regardless of its ethical and moral implications, leaves you balanced on the thin edge of poverty. Poverty quickly burns away the mists of illusion. The concepts that money can buy security or replace the things of true value in your life become the myths they really are. Suddenly, “I can’t” becomes “I must”.

We had been contemplating an off-grid, sustainable lifestyle for some years, but mostly in a far-off dreamy sort of way. However, over the past year, a number of events, both at a personal and global level, aligned such that a window opened, and we were able to peer out and see that our dreams were achievable – we could live in our “cabin in the woods”.

If I have one single piece of advice about how someone can go about achieving their dreams, it is to avoid debt at all costs. We were lucky. Even though we had been living at the poverty line for some years, we were not in debt. We had no mortgages and no loans. So, when we sold our house in Prince Rupert, we had enough money from the sale to buy a piece of “raw” (no buildings or “improvements”), rural off-grid land, and to pay for a small 20’ x 20’ prefab cabin, which will become our new home later this summer. And so begins our adventure ...