

Downsizing

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Image: Our home in Prince Rupert

Wow! How do we accumulate so much stuff? Having sold our home, we now had to pack all our belongings (or at least the important things) into the fish hold of our old fishing boat, the *Moody Blue*.

It is amazing how much stuff you can cram into a moderately sized 4 bedroom home. Some of the stuff we found in our house I don't even remember owning!

So began the task of downsizing. Since we would be living in a 20' x 20' cabin, we had to be very selective about what we were keeping. Yet, at the same time, we needed to be very self sufficient and resourceful in our new life. Tools and resource books would be essential to our success at homesteading. It took a month, but we eventually pared the heap down to what we could fit in our boat. Then we gave stuff away to friends, to charity, basically to anyone who would take it. In the end, some had to go to the dump. It felt terrible to throw good, useful things away, but in our throw-away world, people do not want used things when they can buy them new.

When it was all over, I figure we gave away about a third of our stuff, threw out about a third, and kept the remainder. At first, the task of severe downsizing was very painful. Some of the stuff that I was getting rid of was from my childhood. It took me awhile to come to terms with the fact that the memories were separate from the thing itself, and that throwing something away did not mean you were throwing away the memories that it evoked. Likewise, I found that a number of the things that I had been keeping were connected with bad memories. Why was I keeping these things? Finally, I made a rule for myself – throw away things that have bad memories. Clean the slate and let healing take place.

Downsizing was the first step in our transition. It was "housecleaning" – clearing out the dust and grime of our old lives so that we could start fresh. Sure, it was painful. There were some things that I got rid of that still hurt to think about, but time will cure that. However, in the end, mostly I feel relieved, freed even, from the burden of owning, and looking after so much stuff.