

# Home

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***Image:*** Our new home.

A vibrant green triangle – that’s my first impression of our new home as we pass through the narrows near the head of Port Neville Inlet. A vibrant green triangle pointed uphill towards a background of mountains, with the broad base coming down to meet the shoreline. Two deer calmly graze seaweed at the edge of a creek.

I never thought that I would actually be the co-owner, or rather, to my way of thinking, “caretaker”, of 50 acres of land. I’m awed. It’s a great responsibility, to care for the land, rather than abuse it. And this land needs a little care, for pristine it is not. The bright green triangle is a newly grown forest of young alder trees, as the site was clear cut some 10 or 15 years ago. Along the shoreline, a narrow strip of old growth remains. These tall stately trees – red cedar, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, and big leaf maple – stand in mute testimony of what the land was once like.

We are not deterred by this – we had seen aerial photos of the site, and knew its history. In fact, we feel deeply called to help heal this land, and begin the process of bringing in back to a fully functional and diverse forest which can sustain us and the wild creatures of this land. The vibrant green tells me that the alder are doing well – there are no signs of slides or soil damage. The alder trees are nature’s way of beginning the healing process, as they capture nitrogen from the air and add it back to the soil, thus enriching the soil for other plant species.

Later that day, the wind drops, and we row to shore. As we walk along the beach, I feel my spirit reach out to touch this new place, to start the process of binding my new life to this land. The bird song is incredible – I hear thrushes, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and many species that I cannot yet name. There are wolf and bear tracks along the shore. The intertidal zone is rich with shellfish and other invertebrates living in the fine-grained sand. I feel the richness and health of the land. I know that this land will be able to support us.

Just inside the fringe of old growth trees is a “clearing” of sorts. Not a grassy field by any means, but an area free of large trees. Masses of ivy, rose bush, salmonberry, and thimbleberry form an almost impenetrable thicket. We battle our way through far enough to be able to tell that this was once an old homestead site – there is ivy, lilac, honeysuckle, and broom growing wild throughout the site, sure signs of past human occupation. Under a broad spreading cedar we find an old coffee pot and a glass canning jar.

I am concerned about water on the site. Already the summer has been very hot, and although there are signs of two streams on the land, both are dry. We bushwack our way up the slope, with hopes of intersecting an old logging road that runs through the site. The alder is thick, with lots of salmonberry, but not as difficult as the briar tangle at the old homestead site. After awhile we find the road, and it is easy to hike along. The salmonberries are sweet and juicy – they provide wonderful trail food. And a sight that lifts my heart – the old logging road is acting like a swale, trapping water that is flowing down from the upper reaches of the site. Several large pools have formed, one of which is clearly being fed by a small spring. The water runs under the road through a culvert, splashing against the rocks below in a wonderful tinkling music. We follow the small stream back down towards the shore, and find that it sinks into the ground underneath the branches of a spreading maple tree. Although we know that this summer will probably be a dry one for us, the water is here, and with some careful management and cisterns in place to catch the

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water during the rainy periods, there will be enough to support our crops and ourselves. We are overjoyed. Our new home is everything we had hoped for and more!