

## Homesteading Opportunity Updates

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Thank you for your interest in our homesteading opportunity! The response from everyone has been incredible, and we are just blown away!! Originally, I wasn't sure if we'd get a single applicant, and now my email box is full. This is terrific, but it also means that I now have to set up a process ... so bear with me!

In this post, I will address the general process and timeline that we will use for selecting an applicant for this summer. In follow-up posts, I will address specific questions that have come up.

OK, so keeping this as simple as possible ...

- We will accept applications for this year up until March 31st, 2019. During this time period, we will respond to applicant questions as completely and timely as possible.
- After March 31st, 2019, we will rank the applicants based on the information we have received from them, looking for individuals who will be the best match for our situation. We will offer the position to the top ranked applicant. If they are unable to accept, we will offer the position to the next highest ranked applicant, and so on, until someone accepts the position. If no one accepts, we will restart the process in April, 2019.
- The initial position will be a one to three month work stay starting on or after May 1st, 2019. This will essentially be a chance for everybody to get to know each other. The work stay will be unpaid, and the applicant will be expected to cover their own expenses. In return, we will try to cram their heads full of as much information as they can absorb during that time, so that they can make a wise and informed decision regarding their future with us. The work stay can be terminated at any time by either party if the situation is not copacetic. Consider this a working vacation ...
- After the work stay term, if all parties are agreeable, we will offer a lease term to the applicant. If, however, the applicant does not wish to stay under a lease agreement, we will restart the process, possibly for a fall 2019 work stay or a spring 2020 work stay. All applicants will be kept on record, and reviewed should the position become available again.
- The lease agreement will be year-by-year initially, subject to termination by either party. Again, this will allow both parties time to develop a working relationship, or decide that their interests and needs lie elsewhere. The lease will involve a minimum exchange of funds (e.g., \$1 or whatever is the legal minimum for such arrangements). The lessee will not be required to assist in mortgage payments (the land is paid off) or taxes (the lessor will pay all land taxes). Other details of the lease will be determined at the time of offer.
- The hope is that both families living on the property will achieve a harmonious and happy relationship. Should this happen, we, the land owners, would set up the legal mechanisms (e.g., through our wills) that would allow the land to pass to the leasing family upon our deaths. Again, the details of this would be worked out in the future, and this is just the general concept.

As a final note, what we are offering is a lifestyle opportunity, not actually a job. The work that you put into the homestead would be, hopefully, to your own benefit, either from a short-term learning perspective or a long-term commitment to the land and its stewardship. The two families living on the land will need to work together, and be committed to each others' survival, so personalities and relationships, community building, and care for one another are important ingredients to the final success of this endeavor.

Thank you for applying!

Here are some FAQ's that have come up:

*I am wondering what the community of Port Neville is like – are there many other folks around?  
Who lives nearby?*

We have one neighbor on land adjacent to us; however, he only comes out to the property a half dozen or so times a year. The next closest property is about four miles down the inlet at a site called Robber's Knob. That family has just finished building a beautiful new home on their property, but again, only use it as a vacation home. Eight miles from us, at the entrance of the Inlet is a cluster of properties. Two of the properties have full time residents; however one of them is currently trying to sell his property. The good news on that is that there are some very interested buyers who are looking at homesteading full time. The Hansen property, at the dock, is also for sale. Currently there is interest by the local First Nations band in purchasing that land. The remainder of the properties at the entrance are used sporadically as vacation homes.

The nearest "real" community to Port Neville Inlet is Sayward, which is 16 miles by water. Sayward is a fair sized community, with enough children to support a school and a community center. However, our major shopping center is Campbell River, another hours drive from Sayward. We keep our old truck parked in Kelsey Bay (Sayward's harbour), take our boat to Sayward and the truck to Campbell River.

*Are there other homeschooling families?*

There are no school age children in the Inlet at the moment. Once, the Inlet had a large enough community to actually support a school, but unfortunately not anymore. I would be willing to assist a family interested in home schooling. I've been a teacher, and also have some good ideas about approaches to home schooling.

*What are the community's values?*

The few people here are a pretty mixed group, ranging through the spectrum from vegetarians and environmentalists to First Nations to "survivalists". By in large, everyone agrees on sustainable use of resources. I think the next generation will have a lot of input on what the community will look like in the future.

*Do folks get together regularly for community events?*

Yes, we often do Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and gatherings for birthdays.

*In terms of income generation, what is the internet access like?*

Given where we are, the internet access is pretty decent. We are using cellular through both Bell and Telus. The bandwidth can be a bit tight, and the cost per GB is relatively high, but not outrageous. I pay a little under \$100/month, and this is enough for my consulting and writing, as

well as any internet searches we need. We don't, however, download movies. It would be possible, at some expense, to have an Xplornet satellite installed out here. The initial setup would be fairly expensive, as one of their service people would have to come out, but afterwards, the cost per GB would be lower and access "might" be faster.

*What is the First Nation band like? Do they live close by and are there children there? Are they open to settler folks participating in community life with them?*

The local First Nation band, the Tlowitsis, is friendly, but largely preoccupied with sorting out land claims and other issues at the moment. They have a small test shellfish aquaculture site in the Inlet, and come by to check that, and their two reserves in the Inlet, every couple of months or so. They do not live close by – they are currently based in Campbell River. I'm not certain how many children they would have in Campbell River, but certainly none based out in Port Neville. As far as settler folk participating in community life with them, I'd say probably not much at the moment. The current First Nations situation in BC (e.g., unceded lands, unsettled land claims) tend to create barriers between communities. I whole-heartedly hope these issues will be settled some day, and we can all work together in peace.

*What industry/resource extraction takes place in Port Neville? Are there any plans for future projects in the works?*

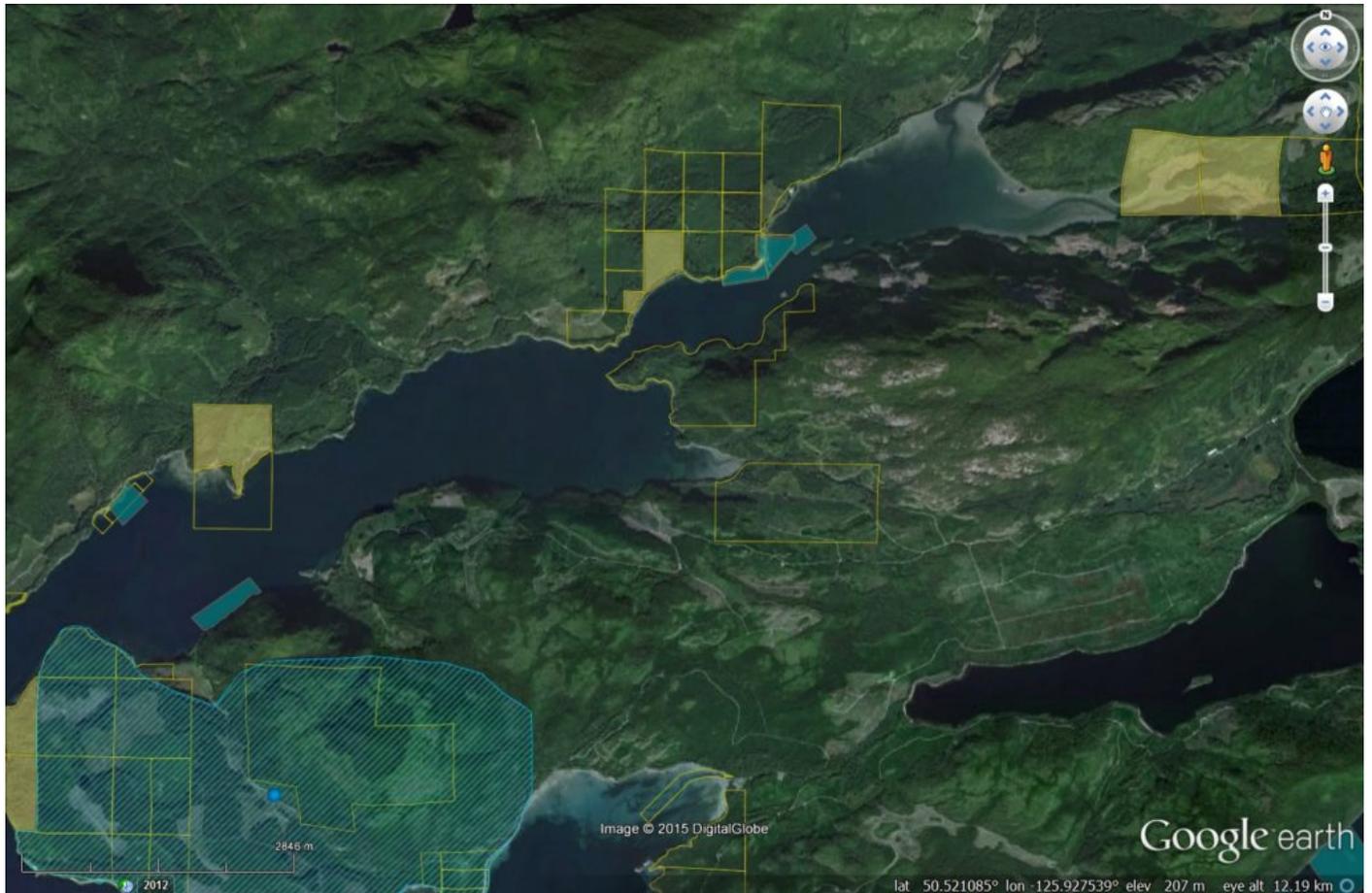
The major industry in Port Neville is logging; however, this is pretty small and sporadic these days. There is some commercial crab fishing here. The Inlet is closed to salmon aquaculture. Other than the First Nation's shellfish mariculture, there is little else in the works for the future. It is a very quiet and beautiful place now, but has had a long history.

*What is the availability of land in Port Neville Inlet?*

There is relatively little private land available these days in Port Neville (see areas marked in yellow on the aerial photos below):



Private land at the mouth of Port Neville Inlet



### Private land at the head of Port Neville Inlet

Many of the other lots used to be private, but have reverted back to provincial ownership after people lost interest in living out here, and failed to pay their taxes. Originally, many of the people living in the Inlet were hand loggers and their families. After World War I, veterans were offered land in BC, much of it in remote areas. We believe that our homestead, which we can date back to about 1920, originated from these land grants. As industrial, clear-cut style logging replaced hand logging, many of the original families were forced to leave. This depopulation occurred throughout the BC coast. Ultimately, as a result of this population decline and a loss of other revenue, the BC Coast Steamship Service was terminated in the 1970s. This service was not only the glue that held the coastal communities together, it allowed people to live out here relatively cheaply, as they could get supplies shipped to them without the need to own their own vessel.

So, land availability is somewhat limiting. The private lots do come up for sale occasionally, but not in great numbers. The First Nations also don't have much land out here – only two small reserves. Getting the government to release the original lots for sale or lease probably won't happen until land claims are settled.

### *What is your vision for your land and the Port Neville Inlet community?*

Our land has the capacity, and zoning, to allow the settlement of two families. It is our vision that the lower 10 acres, which was the original homestead, eventually be reclaimed for farming using permaculture principles. It is our hope that the land will provide the sustenance for the people living upon it. The remaining 40 acres of trees we would like to see managed largely as a wildlife reserve, with some limited sustainable harvest. From the overall perspective of Port Neville Inlet, we have had some discussions with the First Nations regarding the potential establishment of an Indigenous and Community Conserved Area or a local marine management area based on the principles of EBM (ecosystem-based management). I have had some experience in this field (I am an ecologist and oceanography, and have worked with First Nations on similar issues in the Prince Rupert area for 20 years prior to buying the land in Port Neville Inlet). With respect to rekindling/rebuilding the Port Neville Community, there are two things I think we really need: (1) interested and motivated younger people (most of us out here are over 65); and (2) access to land. If these can be achieved, I believe that we can reestablish the old village-style community that once existed in this area.

### *How would I support myself financially in Port Neville Inlet?*

That depends largely on what an individual needs for financial support. In terms of “jobs” in the area, these are largely limited to very seasonal and site specific forestry, and a bit of commercial fishing. Outside of that, if you couldn’t work from home (e.g., as a writer, artist, computer programmer, webpage designer, etc.), you would be looking at taking a job in an urban center, such as Campbell River. That would not leave much time for working on the homestead. We manage the situation by keeping our needs small and doing the odd contract work to maintain a cash flow. One of the advantages of living sustainably on your own land is that your expenses can be reduced quite markedly. This then means that you don’t need to make as much money to survive.

With good management, the property could probably produce a small income, but distance to markets is a real issue for things like fresh produce. Products that can be preserved and delivered to the market during the “off” season are likely the best option.

### *Where would we live during the work stay (and potentially longer term)?*

In terms of housing, or having a place to live, it’s pretty much make your own (which is why I listed this as a homesteading opportunity as opposed to a farming opportunity).

We live in a small 20’ x 20’ cabin, and could host somebody on our floor space for a few days while they got organized, but it would be very difficult to maintain that situation for more than a very short period.

So, in the short term (e.g., for the one to three month work stay), I would recommend one of the following, depending on your lifestyle needs: (1) using a simple backpacking style tent; (2) finding/purchasing a cabin tent or yurt; (3) borrowing/renting or otherwise obtaining a truck/camper or small trailer (this would need to be brought to the site by sea truck); or (4) if you are the boating type, borrowing/renting or otherwise obtaining a small live aboard boat that can be tied to our float.

In the longer term, an option might be to build a small “guest” cabin where a family could stay (although this is subject to budgetary constraints, as our cash flow at the moment is slow and limited). In the very long term, if someone had made the commitment to stay, I would visualize that they would build their own homestead to meet their own personal needs and goals.

### *What would the costs be of living with you?*

The cost of living with us is also somewhat determined by your lifestyle needs. A similar opportunity on a homestead in Pouce Coupe (<https://wildwood.farm/portfolio/residency-terms-conditions/>) was asking the applicant to put up \$1500 for expenses for a three month stay for one person. The expenses you would need to cover for the residency are:

- **Your food costs.** Groceries can be purchased at Campbell River, and to a lesser extent, Sayward. As the season progresses, garden vegetables and other forage items will become available. Fishing is a possibility. For simplicities sake, applicants will be asked to look after cooking their own meals – as a scientist and a captain, Kennard and I are rather distracted chefs at best, and catch-as-catch-can when we get very busy. I expect there will be shared common meals, eaten for the joy of friendship and community, but these will likely be arranged ad hoc.
- **Your fuel and transportation costs.** This will depend entirely on what you need to bring in for your personal comfort and how many times over the course of the stay you will need to go to town. If you would like to bring a trailer or camper into the site, this will require a sea truck. Rates for this can be as high as \$500 or more each way, less if you can coordinate with other peoples’ deliveries. Trips to town may be coordinated with us or with the neighbours; however, this would be based on the schedules of those involved. Most of us only go out once a month or so. If you do share a ride with someone, it is considered polite to offer fuel money, although most people will take you for free as long as it works within their schedule. Fuel costs for a typical trip to town for us, using the *Awen* which is our most efficient boat, run about \$100 or so. Another option for someone who has their Pleasure Craft Operators Certificate and some marine experience is to use our second boat, at the cost of fuel and maintenance for the duration of their stay, which would give them some personal freedom for travelling about (although also the responsibility of looking after the boat). Finally, it is always possible to charter a boat to pick you up and bring you back to Port Neville. The cost for this is variable (probably seasonally as well as relating to the type, size, and speed of the charter boat).

- **Any other specific personal needs.**

*What's in this for me?*

Good question!

In the short-term, consider this as a working vacation and a learning experience. It will be a chance for you to become familiar with the lifestyle, both in terms of the joys and the tasks, associated with living in a rural, off-grid, remote region. You'll have the chance to ask many questions, and try out a few things for yourself, under the guidance of experienced off-gridders. Quickly, you'll learn if this type of life is meant for you, without having made the commitment to purchase land yourself.

In the long-term, we are providing access to land. As noted in a previous FAQ, purchasable private land is very limited, both in our region, and in the province as a whole. The land that is available is often expensive. We paid \$137,000 for the property (50 acres with no buildings or services) in 2015, and another \$60,000 or so for the cabin, equipment, and other improvements. Since the land is remote and off-grid, it is often considered "recreational" property by banks and other loaning institutes, and is thus not a candidate for a mortgage. So our output of money was all "cash on the barrel" as they say. Currently, there are two other properties for sale in the Inlet, a 5 bedroom home on 61.5 acres of land for \$849,000 and bachelor style cabin on 11 acres for \$265,000. Without the availability of a mortgage, such land may well be out of the range of many people.

Some people may feel that the land owner is getting all the benefits of improvements made by the lessee, and that the land can easily be sold out from under the lessee. Unfortunately, this can happen, but it is sincerely my hope that a well-designed agreement between compatible individuals can create the ideal situation for a family that truly wants access to land. Work that a long-term tenant performed on the land would be for their direct benefit – the building of their home and development of associated agricultural land. Even should the land be sold, a lease registered on the title can provide some degree of security for a tenant. Furthermore, should the land need to be sold (e.g., the current land owners are forced to move out due to health issues), an arrangement where the tenants get right of first refusal can be set up. So, while nothing in life is certain but change itself, there are ways to look after each other as best we can ....