

Episode 1: Escaping the Lower Mainland

It was 2011, and I could bear it no longer. I had to get out of the Lower Mainland! The uneasiness was a constant visceral anxiety. As I came to grips with my inner dilemma, I realized something had to change, and soon.

Then, through the grace of good friends, I discovered the Shuswap Highlands. Joy replaced anxiety, with moments of sheer giddy bliss as my eyes drank in the luscious green valleys and the strong hills caressed by turbulent clouds leaning towards the heart of blue water, Shuswap Lake. At last I could exhale and breathe deeply again. This felt like home!

Now came the hard part, how to let the family know we were taking the plunge, heading out of town away from our friends and all that we knew. My 16 year old son flatly refused, defiantly promising to run away. My husband's eyes looked glazed as he mumbled that he was definitely wanting to leave urban life, but not just yet! While my 21 year old daughter was firmly supportive, underneath her calm exterior was a rising panic – her family was about to be ripped apart and the future on her own in the city looked scary.

Through it all, I just kept saying, "I'm going– I have to leave here!" Mum's lost her mind, off her rocker, mid-life crisis, they all muttered behind my back. But for the first time in years, I wasn't lost at all, I had found where I felt at home – The Shuswap Hills and Valleys.

The challenge to find the perfect niche in those Shuswap Hills consumed me for the next two years. I scoured the MLS listings, finding so much that looked promising, and long lists of possible prospects played through my mind night and day.

At last, the appointment was made with the realtor for Easter Weekend 2013, but just as my feet stepped over the threshold, one of my sheep was discovered dead in the field, a bawling lamb beside her, and my son started projectile vomiting in the bathroom. Now, being a mom to animals and kids means I am always ready to fix every problem – but not today! I passed the "mommy torch" to my husband and ran out the door!

As I traveled up the TCH with my Labrador, Jack, playing co-pilot, I was determined to find our new home before I returned. Friends in Sunnybrae gave us a true Shuswap Welcome when we arrived; both Jack and I were shown to the best bedroom, and treated to a marvelous dinner of local delicacies.

Then the call to the Realtor – "Here I am, ready to go tomorrow morning!" – I had high expectations of success! The realtor's surprise at my words set me back, "But I thought you were coming next week!" she exclaimed. "I have nothing arranged at all for this weekend!" My confidence disappeared in a puff of exhaled disappointment. Visions of our new home evaporated leaving only disbelief at this turn of events. My hard won getaway was for naught! All I could see at that moment was my own stupidity in not confirming everything the day before. It was clear I would return defeated, my dreams to be pushed to the back of the shelf. Or would I? *Find out in Episode2 – Miracles Happen in the Shuswap!*