

Sep 12 - Northward Ho!

We left Errington this morning heading north on the inland island highway bound for Courtenay. The drive didn't take long. We'd driven past the Visitor's Centre many times, but today we decided to stop and have a look around.



The staff were very pleasant and extremely helpful. I thought our destination today was going to be Strathcona Park west of Campbell River, but when we asked about provincial campgrounds hereabouts, we were told Miracle Beach (north of Courtenay) was the place to head. So we did.

Before we left the Centre, we enjoyed a coffee by the pond.



On the way, we stopped in Courtenay for an oil change. Unlike Jiffy Lube in the US, we were able to nose the van into the bay without having to unhook Ali. Boy, that saved me a lot of effort. About 15 minutes later, we were backing out, on our way to Miracle Beach.

What a nice provincial park! Lovely big sites spread out so neighbours are a long way away. Our kind of camping - not that we're anti-social. We're here for two nights.



After setting up camp, we walked to the beach. What a view!



We're not sure what we're going to do tomorrow. You'll just have to join us to find out! See you then.

Sep 13 - Quadra Island

My tour guide had two suggestions for today: Elk Falls suspension bridge or Quadra Island. Neither of us have been to Quadra so off we headed for the BC Ferries terminal downtown Campbell River.

On the drive in, we stopped at the waterfront walkway in Willow Point.



We've walked this paved trail before. On our walk we met "Buddy" and his owner.



Buddy was a long-haired Daschund - the same colouring as our old girl Mattie. What a cutie!

We checked into BC Ferries, had a short wait, then drove onto the ferry for a 10-minute ride to Quadra Island.



We drove to Heriot Bay via Rebecca Spit. We ventured out to the end of the spit and turned around. I had seen a spot by the water a short distance back. On the way back we went through the forest.



We parked Alfie and headed the short distance to the beach. Actually Jen couldn't wait, or I farted around doing something.. I don't remember, nonetheless...



I joined Jen on a log for the dreaded selfie!



We strolled the shoreline and were amazed at what we saw: moon jellies.



a Dungeness crab, unfortunately "mort"



and, what we think is the skeleton of a wolf eel.



There were all sorts of moon jellies lapping against the shore. I guess with no brain they're at the mercy of the tides as to where they go if they're too close to shore. There sure were a lot of them!



Okay, so back in Alfie, we headed for the Heriot Bay pub. They have some neat vinyl siding there!



Inside the pub, there were many old photos. I couldn't resist this one.

The view to the water from the pub reminded us a little of Mayne Island.



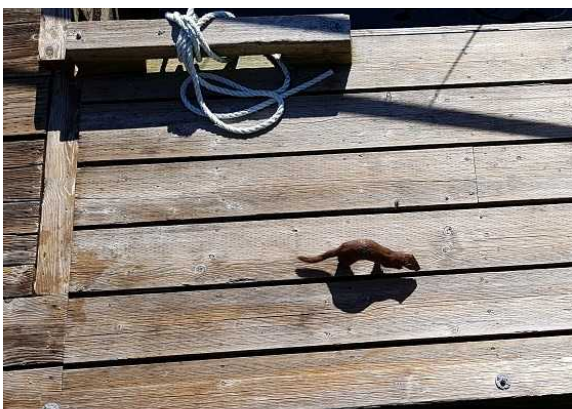
We decided to have lunch at the pub. During lunch we chatted with a gent from San Diego. He was starting a 6-day kayak trip the next day. Mike is co-owner of the Burger Lounge chain of high-end, but

inexpensive, burger restaurants in SoCal (www.burgerlounge.com). We chatted at length, but it was soon time for us to head back to the ferry.

We were early so while Jen took it easy, I cruised the boat jetties. I saw this large yacht and couldn't help noticing its crest.



Just killing time before I headed back to Alfie and the ferry, I noticed this furry little guy. A weasel??



Back at the campground, we went for a walk a bit further along the beach than yesterday. It was a nice walk. There are some big trees here!



It had been a nice day. The weather was certainly great and we ticked Quadra Island off our list.

Tomorrow we're going to Elk Falls. See you there.



Sep 14 - Chainsaw Carvings, Elk Falls, and more!

On the way to Elk Falls, we stopped in Willow Point at a display of chainsaw carvings. These were done earlier in 2017 in celebration of Canada's 150 celebration. The carvings were remarkable. Here are a few pictures.



At Elk Falls provincial park, we set up camp - nice big sites nestled in the tall trees.



Jen wanted to visit the suspension bridge at Elk Falls so we headed for the John Hart project. Long story short, old power generating infrastructure is being replaced by BC Hydro.



After touring the Centre we walked the trail to the suspension bridge.



These oak penstocks are 70 years old. What an impressive sight.



They are being replaced by a single underground tunnel from the John Hart dam to a new underground generating station (6 turbines) and then out to the river via another new underground tunnel.

We crossed over the bridge over the penstocks and continued on to the falls.



Jen had to stop just short of the suspension bridge because of stairs. I continued on and took some more photos and shot a couple of videos.



Well, that was pretty spectacular!

After a well deserved rest back at camp, we headed for the waterfront and a walk.



I noticed Painters Lodge on the shoreline opposite and suggested to Jen we should go there and have a drink. Jen reminded me that we had been to the Lodge many years ago. So yes, it was definitely time for another visit.

The weather was lovely, the view was to die for, so we shared an appy special - coconut shrimp, steak bites, yam fries, fried pickles accompanied by 3 dips. Absolutely scrumptious.

We chatted with our server about April Point Lodge on Quadra Island (visible across the water in the picture). "That's our sister resort. You can take our boat across. If you spend more than \$5, the trip is free". Say no more, we were on our way!!



Arriving at April Point 15 minutes or so later, we walked to the restaurant. Along the way we noticed this sign.



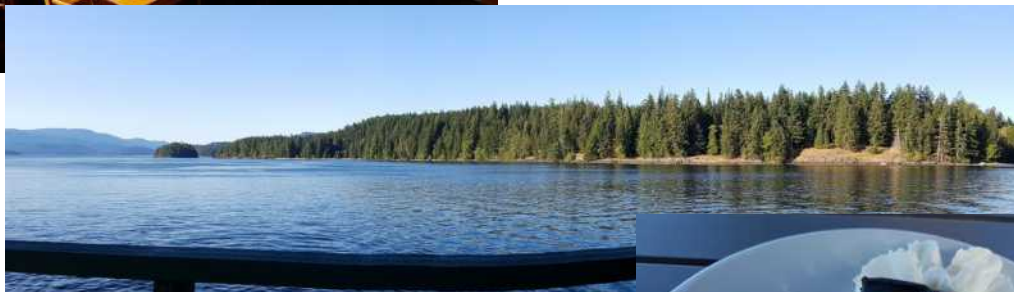
Metal art was on display. This is something I've always wanted to try. The artist had done an exceptional job. This one was large and was not cheap.



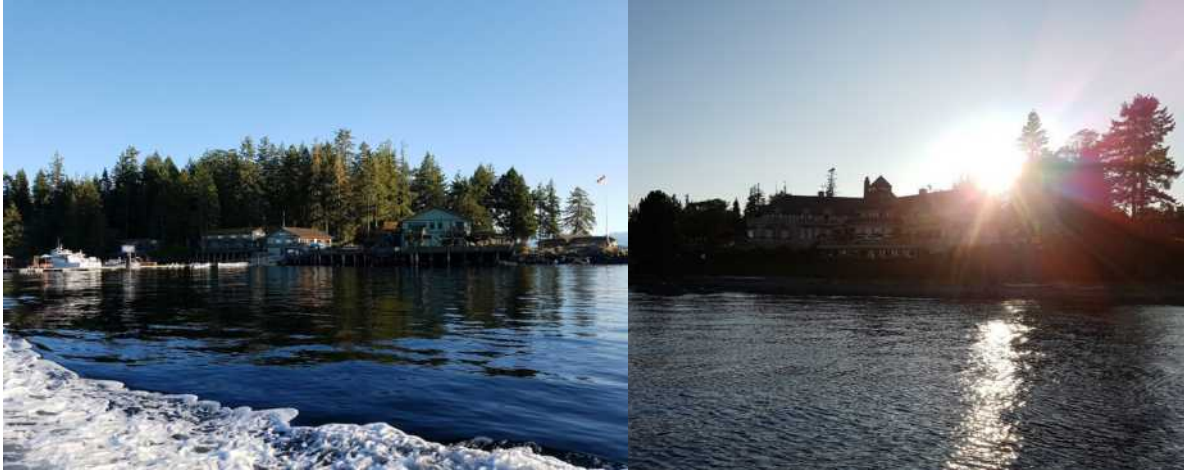
We walked through the restaurant. Not too shabby.



We sat outside for coffee/tea and desert; lemon tart for Jen and chocolate torte pour moi.



Back to reality, we boarded the launch and headed out from April Point back to Painters Lodge.



Walking back to Alfie, I noticed this guy. What's he doing?

Back at Ali, we marveled at the day we had just enjoyed. It's hard to believe we've only been "on the road" three days.

Tomorrow we head into the Campbell River library to catch up on a bit of work. See you there.



Sep 16 - North to Port McNeill

Yesterday was a "chore" day in and around Campbell River. We had some things that needed attention before we headed north today.

We broke camp early this morning, hit Save-on Foods for some supplies, then turned north. The first rest stop we saw overlooked a lake but the picnic tables were in the shade. Brrr, not warm enough yet. We continued on and found another rest area in the sunshine. Yes!, time for a coffee!



We must have seen a million trees, maybe a couple of million, but not much else until we pulled into Alder Bay RV Park, just east of Port McNeill.



I was quite content not to do any more driving today but when Jen suggested a brew at Telegraph Cove, 12 kms east, I perked right up!

On the way to Telegraph Cove, we passed this large log sorting operation, with an active railroad.



WFP Western Forest Products Inc. Englewood Forest Operation

Welcome to Beaver Cove, the terminus of the Western Forest Products Nimpkish Valley logging railroad. The railway extends approximately 95 km to the southern end of the Nimpkish Valley. The railway's construction began around 1920 and continued south of Nimpkish Lake in the 1940's.

What happens at the dryland sort?

Logs arrive at the sort yard by rail or truck and are off-loaded with log loaders capable of carrying 60 tons of logs.

Pre-designated sample loads are taken to a government scaling area on the sort yard to determine stumpage payment to the province. All other loads are spread in rows where log graders mark logs for specific sorts. Up to fifty log sorts are set up for specific mills or customers according to species, size, quality, and value. The primary species harvested are western hemlock, amabilis fir, Douglas fir, western red cedar, and yellow cedar.

After the logs are graded, tracked log loaders set logs of similar sorts into small piles for pickup by wheeled front-end loaders.

The logs are then taken to strapping bunks where metal straps are applied to keep the bundle together. The bundles are weighed and put into the water for booming. Bundles of the same sort are grouped together to make a raft (boom) measuring 21 metres wide by 121 metres long. When twelve booms are accumulated, they are towed by tugboat to the appropriate mills.

Most of the logs sorted at Beaver Cove are shipped to Western Forest Products mills on the south coast of British Columbia to produce lumber, as well as chips for pulp and paper. Some logs are shipped by truck to local customers.

The coarse wood debris generated at the log sort is used to make chips and hog fuel at the local chipping plant next to the dryland sort. The fine debris is composted along with waste from a local fish processing plant to make consumer garden soil amendment products. This reduces the need for land filling and burning of debris.

Here we are approaching Telegraph Cove. This looks interesting!



We drove past a full parking lot over to the campground then down to the waterfront. Paid parking



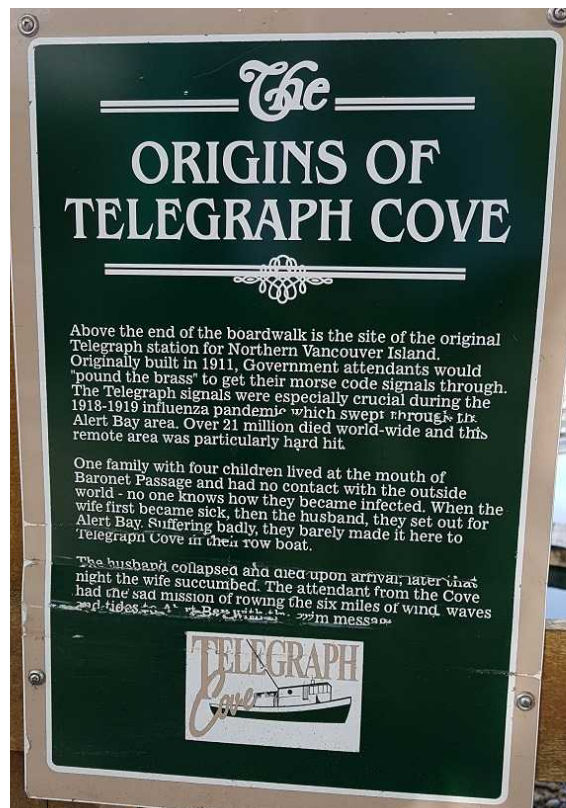
We decided to go back to the main lodge area and park there.

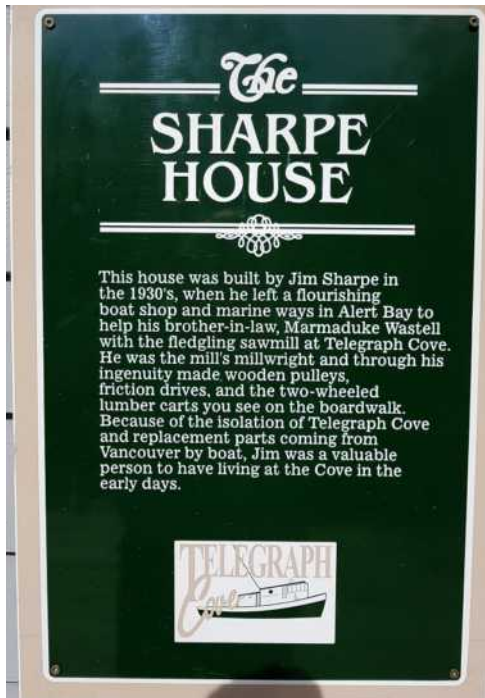


We began our walk clockwise heading to the pub - it's beside the restaurant in the large building straight ahead.

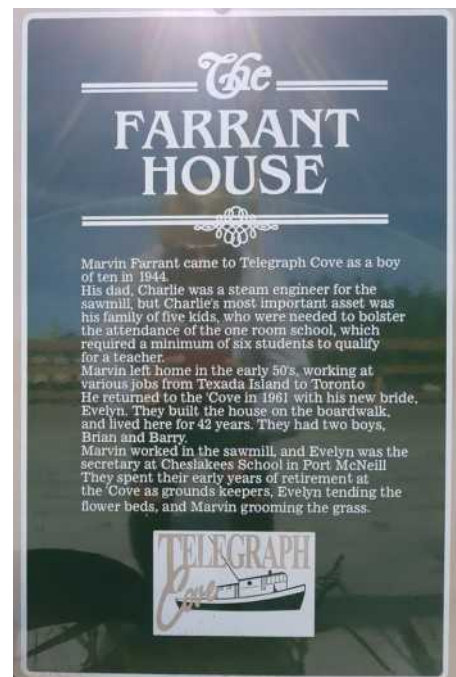


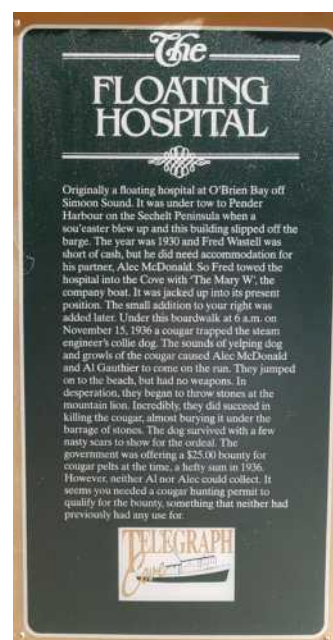
There's a lot of history in these boards.





Still in bloom!

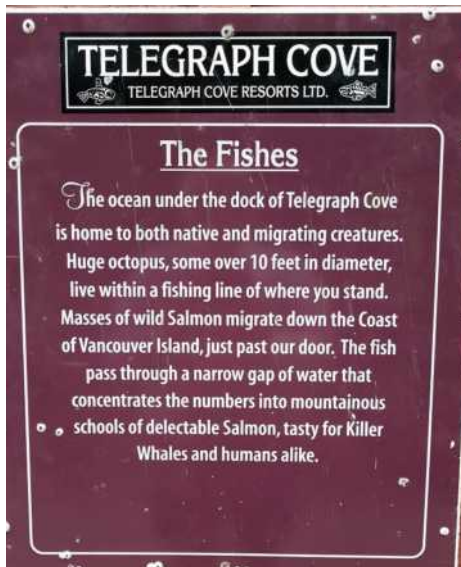




We arrived at the end of the boardwalk and a wedding that was about to begin.



We turned around and headed to the pub, only to find it closed because of the wedding. Ahhh, but the restaurant is still open, so we headed there.



Sitting outside in the glorious sunshine on this September day, we enjoyed some wings and a Killer Whale Pale Ale or two.



Walking back to where we started, it's hard to imagine what life was like back in the good old days.





For more information, check out www.hellobc.com/telegraph-cove/culture-history.aspx and be sure to add Telegraph Cove to your list of places to visit.

Tomorrow's forecast is for rain so you'll have to wait and see what we get up to.

Sep 17 - The World's Largest Burl, Port McNeill

Well, as forecast it is raining. Sure hope the rain extends south on the Island where it is desperately needed. We left Ali and drove into Port McNeill this morning.



We drove down the hill to the waterfront and turned left. I wasn't sure where I was going but as soon as we crossed over a small bridge, there it was. The reason!



I was surprised that the town is as big as it is [pop: 2,064 (2016)]. I guess I was expecting a tiny little hamlet, but such is not the case. As we were told yesterday at Telegraph Cove, it is close to the end of the season so we were not surprised to find the Tourist Info Centre closed.

We had elevenses at Tia's Café then headed back to camp. Jen's going to make stew for dinner and I'm going to spend a rainy Sunday afternoon updating our blog. [Surprise - the clouds parted and the sun shone!]

Tomorrow, weather permitting, we are going to visit Port Hardy [pop: 4,132 (2016)].

See you there.

Sep 18 - Port Hardy

With all due respect to the citizens of Port Hardy, unless you are an outdoorsy type, there really isn't much to do in town on a Monday (Museum closed but Visitors Centre open).



We parked on the main drag and walked down to the waterfront.



We stopped at the Market Street café for tea/ coffee and muffins. They were really very good.

Continuing our walk, I noticed this exceptional mural.



We were back at camp just before 1 p.m. Not a terribly exciting day, but tomorrow my tour guide has suggested a visit to Alert Bay. That should be exciting.

See you there.

Sep 19 - Alert Bay

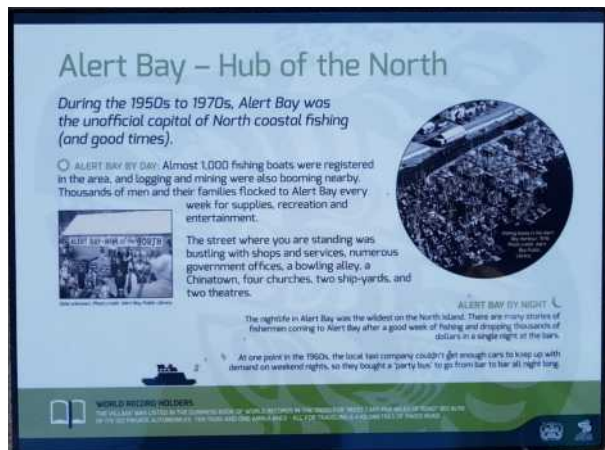
What an ugly sound at 0700! The alarm!! Time to get up, have breakfast, and head for the ferry. The ferry to Alert Bay leaves from Port McNeill at 8:40 a.m. We head out just before 9 and arrive in Port McNeill about 15 minutes later. Wow, we're first in line. And I was concerned that it might be busy!



We departed on time and enjoyed a 45-minute ocean cruise. You sure can't beat the scenery!



We arrived at Alert Bay and headed for the Tourist Info Centre.



Bet you didn't know that Alert Bay was in the Guinness Book of World Records?! (Zoom into the green area)

Just outside the Tourist Centre, I looked back from whence we came.



We drove up the hill to the World's Largest Totem pole. It was 173' (56.4m) but during a storm the top 10' broke off. Still, it is very impressive. Right next door is the Big House



And just down the street is a cemetery.

We wanted to check out the Ecological Park but it meant walking, so we gave it a pass. The Ecological Park, originally known as "Gator Gardens", looks very much like the Florida everglades. It is the result of a dam built on the side of the hill for the fish processing plant many years ago. The dam blocked an underground spring which flooded the top of the hill, killing the trees. The town built a boardwalk across the marsh which allowed visitors a close-up look at the marsh.



We headed for the U'mista Cultural Centre down on the waterfront.



Welcome to the U'mista Cultural Centre

The treasure box of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations

There is a sign above the
entrance to the U'mista
Cultural Centre. It reads:
"U'mista is a word in the
Kwakwaka'wakw language
which means 'treasure box'.
It is the name of the place
where the Kwakwaka'wakw
people have lived for
thousands of years. It is
the place where they have
kept their treasures, their
art, their history, and their
way of life."



Many people believe that a rich and powerful person is someone who has a lot. The people who speak Kwakwaka, the Kwakwaka'wakw, believe that a rich and powerful person is someone who gives the most away. Since a time beyond memory, the Kwakwaka'wakw have been hosting potlatches and potlatching continues to play a central and unifying role in community life today.



Chief Doug Cranmer with renowned
Totem (Dewdney) mask, c. 1980.
Although Doug referred to himself as a
"warrior" and a "chieftain," he is regarded as
one of the greatest Kwakwaka'wakw artists of
all time whose work has inspired generations of
artists in Alaska, B.C. and beyond.

The Meaning of U'mista
In earlier days, people were
sometimes taken captive by
raiding parties. When they
returned to their homes,
either through payment of
ransom or by a raid, they
were said to have u'mista.
The return of our treasures
from distant museums is a
form of u'mista.

The potlatch was banned in Canada between 1885 and 1951. The potlatch masks and other regalia that you see in the Potlatch Gallery were all surrendered under duress to the police after an illegal potlatch in 1921. After the ban was lifted, the Kwakwaka'wakw people fought for decades for the return of their sacred regalia that had ended up in museum and private collections around the world. Most of the regalia has come home and it is shown here at the U'mista Cultural Centre and at the Nuyumbalees Museum near Campbell River.

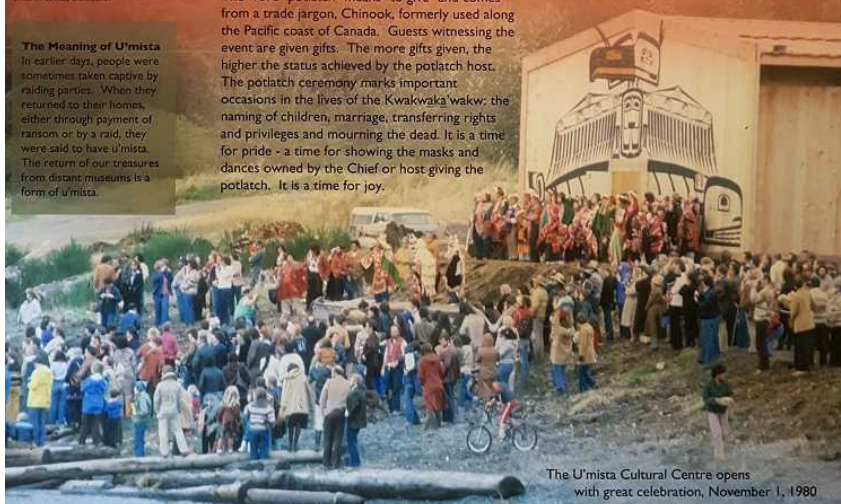
The word "potlatch" means "to give" and comes from a trade jargon, Chinook, formerly used along the Pacific coast of Canada. Guests witnessing the event are given gifts. The more gifts given, the higher the status achieved by the potlatch host. The potlatch ceremony marks important occasions in the lives of the Kwakwaka'wakw: the naming of children, marriage, transferring rights and privileges and mourning the dead. It is a time for pride - a time for showing the masks and dances owned by the Chief or host giving the potlatch. It is a time for joy.



Regalia (legally seized by
police after 1921 potlatch
hosted during tour by Chief
Dan Cranmer.
Photograph by Nelson Agnes Halliday, c. 1921



Photograph marked by
U'mista staff to show
masks still missing and far
from home, c. 2012



The U'mista Cultural Centre opens
with great celebration, November 1, 1980

There are 4 totems here. The two framing the Centre's entrance and..



Also, on the shore, was this structure.



Gilakas'la

These structures are called awakwas. There are five along the shore and each one has a carving of one of the 'Namgis Ancestors from each 'na'mima. 'Na'mima means "those of one kind," and is used in a similar fashion to the word 'clan' in other Indigenous groups.

T'sit'satwalagame' is one 'na'mima, and the name translates as "The Famous Ones."

Their ancestor is Namxlagayu, a great sea monster.

At the time of the great flood a huge sea monster named Namxlagayu, which means "Only-one-coming-up," surfaced with the first man walking along his edge. Namxlagayu looked like a halibut with a quartz crystal on his forehead which showed the supernatural nature of this being. All T'sit'satwalagame' descend from the first man.

The Centre is very well done. Photographs aren't allowed in the Potlatch area but these woven blankets were worth taking a look at.



Chilkat blanket

Weaver: Anonymous

This Northern blanket was made sometime in the late 1800s.

Donated by Lorne Balshine, Gilakas'la.

The Art of Chilkat Weaving

Chilkat is one of the most technically difficult weavings in the world.

It is the only weaving technique that can represent a perfect circle.

Weaving a Chilkat takes a weaver seven to twelve months of full-time work.

Preparation of materials for the blanket also takes several months and involves cedar-bark stripping and cleaning; gathering mountain goats wool and processing the inner wool into yarn; and collecting natural pigments for dyeing the yarn such as wolf moss for yellow and copper oxide for blue or green.

Chilkat blanket

Weaver: Anisalaga, c. 1880s

Anisalaga (Mary Ebbets) made this blanket for her daughter Annie Spencer. Anisalaga was a high-ranking Tlingit noblewoman who brought the northern style of Chilkat weaving south to the Kwakwaka'wakw people.

Her father arranged her marriage to secure connections with the Hudson's Bay Company. Anisalaga married English HBC trader, Robert Hunt, and together they ran the store at Fort Rupert.

Anisalaga's many achievements include running a successful business as a First Nations woman in the late 19th century, birthing thirteen children, and weaving the many complex and beautiful Chilkat blankets and aprons. It is without a doubt that Anisalaga was a formidable woman and an exceptional artist whose story is interwoven with the major historical narratives of our province and nation.

Gilakas'la to the Canadian Heritage (CCPERB) for funding most of the purchase cost of this blanket.

Gilakas'la to 'Namgis First Nation, the Museum Assistance Program (Canadian Heritage) and Orca Sand and Gravel for funding the cost of this showcase.

This little gem caught Jen's eye.



There were many very interesting displays.



I like First Nations art but in small doses. We left the Centre and drove back to the BC Ferries loading area.

We walked past the government dock towards more totem poles.



I snapped this picture and Jen reciprocated.



We walked back along the boardwalk and past the old courthouse.



The Old Courthouse: A One-Stop-Shop for Law Enforcement

This sunny house has an exciting secret. Hint: there are jail bars on the windows of some rooms!



Old Courthouse, Police Station, Jail and Officers' Residence, Pre-1976. Photo credit: Alert Bay Public Library

The bars on the bathroom and closet windows are some of the only reminders left of the days when this house was humming with law enforcement activity.

Amazingly, this small building was simultaneously a jail, courthouse, a police station, and a home for police officers. Some locals still remember crowding into the courthouse to watch a trial, or even spending a night or more in the cramped jail cells (which often held First Nations people who were caught outside after the mandatory evening curfew).

The house was built in 1923 by the BC Provincial Police, with the courthouse added later. It functioned as the police or RCMP office until the 1970s. The courthouse operated until the 1990s, and afterwards the building was a doctor's office, rental accommodation, pawn shop and now a private residence.



Members of the BC Provincial Police in front of the old Police Station. Circa 1948. Photo credit: Alert Bay Public Library

Our ferry docked and we drove on board. It was such a lovely warm day. I took this picture.

Back in Port McNeill it was time for a late lunch. When we visited Port McNeill Sunday, Mugz was closed, but not today.

After refreshments we walked out onto the marina floats and saw this catamaran.



Hard to tell but it is high tide, or close to it. I told Jen that I was a little disappointed when we visited Telegraph Cove the other day because it was low tide. She suggested we visit again, so we did.



The cove looks much nicer filled with water, nice clear salt water.



On the way back to Alfie, we noticed this exquisite carving.

So that was our day. Super nice, especially as the weather cooperated.

Tomorrow we are going to drive to Port Alice, about 1½ hr drive. We'll see you there.



Sep 22 - Woss and Beyond

We're heading back to Campbell River today with a stop at Woss, following the North Island route south.



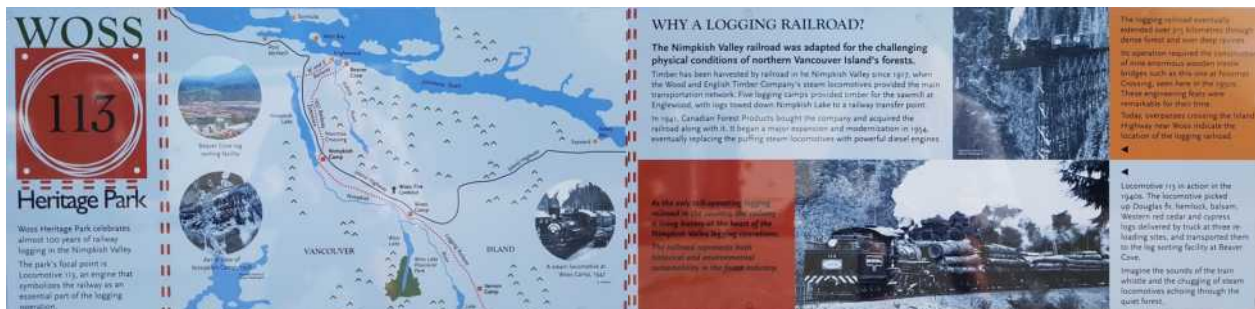
Woss is a Canadian Forest Product's lumber town/village/community located in the Nimpkish valley. CFP owns and operates the only logging railroad in Canada.

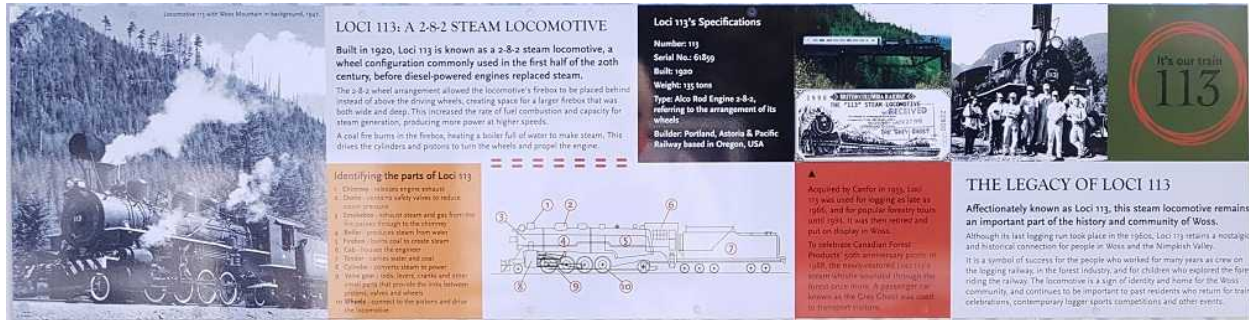
We're looking for locomotive 113, a 2-8-2 Mikado steam engine, on display somewhere around here.

Here she is at the end of the rail yard. We pull in to look around and have a coffee.



Here is a bit of history about Loci 113 and logging in the Nimpkish valley.



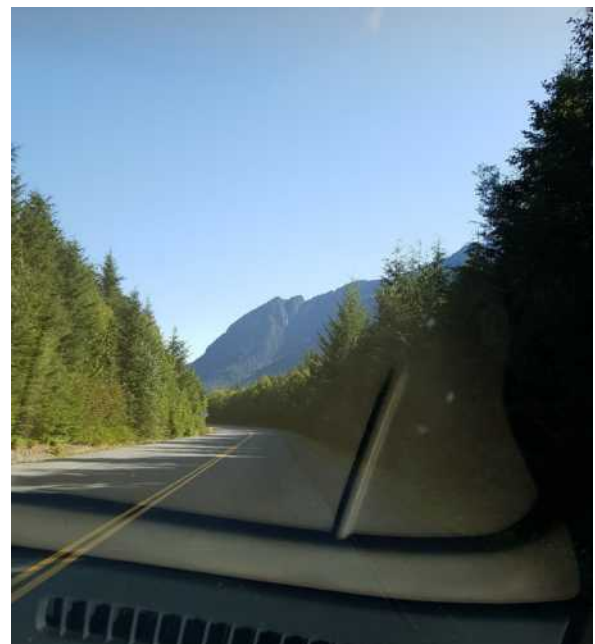


I couldn't resist hopping on the tender running board.



Well that was enjoyable and so was the coffee. Good thing we pack a thermos with hot water before we headed out.

Back on the highway, there are more trees and mountains.



After a stop for lunch at the Sayward junction, we arrive in Campbell River. We had already decided we'd head back to Elk Falls for tonight, maybe two.

Here's our campsite and the Quinsam river running behind us.



On our evening walk, we stopped further up the river and chatted with a couple watching the fish. I wasn't sure it would work, but I shot a video of the fish. I didn't catch any of them jumping. Drat!

We're going to stay a couple of nights here then see where we go Saturday. The days are warm but the nights are definitely cool.

Check back to see where we go next.

Sep 23 - Kitty Coleman Provincial Park, Comox BC

We left Elk Falls this morning heading south. We were looking for a park listed on our provincial campground map - Kin Beach. After driving around trying different routes, we decided to give it up and head to Kitty Coleman Provincial Park, a Class C provincial park. We'd passed this park as we drove south.

The layout of the sites is a bit different. The fire rings and benches are on the water side of the road and the actual campsites are on the other. At least for Jen, this keeps the smoke from the campfires a distance away.



We enjoyed a cuppa and admired the view.



While we enjoyed our tea, I couldn't resist taking this picture.

Just as we were finishing dinner a couple strolled by. We chatted at length. Howard and Jean are originally from Yorkshire, UK. It's been 40 years since they emigrated but you wouldn't know that talking to Howard; he sounds like he just got off the boat! What a nice couple. They live in Union Bay (just down the road) and each year they travel south with their class C motorhome to Desert Hot Springs, CA for five months. They suggested we should check it out. We might just do that.



The next morning we were bound and determined to find Kin Beach. None of our maps or literature had any markings relating to Kin Beach. Howard and Jean said it was on the north side of the airport. So off we headed. Turning onto a road at the north end of the Comox airport (and going past a pub - a good sign), we arrived at the proverbial fork in the road and just at the last minute, there it was! A sign to Kin Beach.

We parked Alfie and strolled out the waterfront walk in the sunshine. Just as we were approaching a wooded heart, we noticed Bob about to take a picture of his wife of 50 years, Sheila, standing in the heart. I immediately asked if they wanted a picture of the two of them. Of course! So we traded taking pictures.

We chatted - at least 30 minutes or more, Jen standing all the while. While I didn't want to, I suggested it was time to get (Jen) moving. I knew this was going to bite her later.

Bob and Sheila are locals. They have a 22' travel trailer, but Bob really doesn't like dragging it around. They've been looking at mini-buses. Bob is definitely interested in the concept of kitting out a mini-bus and making it a mini motor home. Of course I had to ask an obvious question: "So are you going to tow a car?" Bob's answer was something along the lines of: "Well, there you go. What do you do?"



There are tradeoffs no matter what you decide. I must admit I sometimes think a Sprinter-type van towing a Smart car might be a way for us to go down the road. But then Jen asks where her wheelchair will go and my planning starts all over again.

Bob indicated he'd be quite happy just trailing his trailer around Vancouver Island, but no further. I wish them well. It was a real treat to meet them. I hope our paths cross again.

We ran into Courtenay, did a bit of shopping, then headed back to camp. When we pulled in, I noticed a pamphlet lying on one of our chairs. Howard and Jean had dropped off a brochure about the RV park in Desert Hot Springs. Thank you so much!

Tomorrow we head home via the old Island Highway. See you then.

Sep 25 - Homeward Bound

We awoke to rain. (Here's a colour picture).

On the way south, we stopped in Union Bay and made coffee. While we were enjoying our coffee and the break, I received an email from our young Czech friend Jarda. I had emailed him some time ago. Turns out he and Petra, along with both mums, an aunt, and friends were holidaying in Bower (just down the road). A flurry of emails later we decided to meet up after lunch.



Lunch at the FBI was delicious. We hadn't been there for a very long time.

After lunch and a 10 minute drive, we were in Bowser. We met Jarda and walked down to the beach and their holiday accommodation. Nice place and wow, here's the family.



The ladies (L-R) are Petra's mum, Jarda's aunt, Jarda's mum. The gentlemen are friends. Jarda, always clowning around, is sitting on Petra's lap.

Petra offered tea and coffee and we chatted for quite a while - Jarda doing the translation. What a great group.

Jarda wanted the gang to see our trailer so we met at the top of the driveway. We said our goodbyes and the gang took off for the Horne Lake Caves.

What a pleasant surprise. Nothing planned but it just happened that we could get together for a short while and meet Jarda and Petra's and their rellies. We've even been invited to the Czech Republic. Oops, some language training is going to be required. Our one word of Czech is "ahoj" (ahoy) which means "hello" or "goodbye".

We arrived back home in Errington mid afternoon. In the past two weeks we have seen a lot and met some really nice folk. We covered 895 miles.

Until our next trip, safe travels.