

# CAMPBELL RIVER LIVING



Bishop Richard Gagnon (left) blesses Father Charles Brandt.

## Forty years in the priesthood

Father Charles Brandt of Black Creek celebrated his 40th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood last Sunday at St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

Over 200 parishioners were on hand for mass concelebrated by Bishop Richard Gagnon of Victoria, Fr. Brandt, Fr. Bill McDonald, pastor of St. Patrick's and retired priest, Fr. Joseph Killoran.

For many years Fr. Brandt has literally been a man crying out in the wilderness about the dangers of our destructive relationship with the earth resulting in deforestation, pollution of rivers and the extinction of species. Locally his work, a true labour of love and service, has focused on the restoration of the Tsolum and Oyster rivers, and Kingfisher Creek.

Now he is seen as a man ahead of his time as governments around the world just met in Paris to acknowledge the growing crisis due to global warming.

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# West Coast's 'other town' is on the rise

Ucluelet no longer takes a back seat to Tofino as the little town thrives thanks to a long-term vision for growth

Paul Rudan  
*The Mirror*

Three days of low cloud and thick fog seemed like adequate mental preparation for our trip to Ucluelet.

The grey shroud hung over the east coast of Vancouver Island, dampening our spirits as we motored along Highway 4 towards the West Coast.

"Maybe it'll break once we get over the mountains," I offered hopefully during a coffee break in Port Alberni, which was equally grey and rainy.

My travelling partner gave me a less-than-optimistic look. She knows full well Ucluelet and Long Beach can be even worse in the weather department in late January. Just the week before it had rained 110 millimetres – in one day!

But just before Kennedy Lake, the first hint of blue sky appeared above the rugged, snow-capped peaks. And as we proceeded further west, the clouds gave way to open blue sky.

The sunshine felt great and the warm air allowed us to crank back the sunroof as we bobbed over the ups

and downs of Pacific Rim Highway towards Ucluelet.

My, what a different place than I remember it was some 15 years ago when the pro-logging locals actually seemed proud of their mountain backdrop which had been shaved bald by chainsaws. Today, the mountains have "greened-up" nicely and Ucluelet has diversified its economy.

There are still loggers, commercial fishing boats and processing plants, but Ucluelet is now much more. Thanks to a progressive municipal government, which knows the importance of a sound infrastructure (Tofino could learn many lessons), the little town is attracting big-money resorts and new, well-planned residential developments.

We took a quick tour around town and from there it was time to check into our B&B. The Ebb Tide Bed and Breakfast is located near the south tip of town on Peninsula Road, almost directly across from the entrance to the Wild Pacific Trail.

Host Robert Pankurst welcomed us out front of his lovely two-storey home



Paul Rudan/Mirror Staff

The sun seemingly melts into the Pacific Ocean during a tour of the Broken Islands, just south of Ucluelet.

and showed us to our room which looks out on Spring Cove. The B&B has three self-contained, ocean-front rooms and he hopes to build two more cabins in the next few years.

There's a wonderful feeling of privacy at the Ebb Tide, and Robert – a former Vancouverite who organized banquets and other functions in big hotels, until he and his wife escaped to their Ucluelet dream – is a fine host who knows his community well.

He's also a great cook and prepared us breakfasts of omelet and the best French toast we've ever had. Of course, this is accompanied by fresh baked goods and a medley of sliced fruit.

On Saturday morning, after breakfast, Pankurst suggested we hike the Wild Pacific Trail. It proved to be an ideal jaunt to get the body going. It's a beautiful 2.7 km looped trail with stunning views of the open Pacific and rocky shores which are pummeled by the waves and swells.

The people of Ucluelet have done a remarkable job in ensuring the natural values of the trail – which also goes through rain forest – are well-protected and

there are numerous sturdy benches to rest your feet, or snuggle with a loved one, which overlook the ocean from high on the bluff.

The day before we got a closer look at the ocean during a sunset trip to the Broken Islands aboard Subtidal Adventures. Owner/operator Brian

Congdon has been in Ucluelet running tour boats since the 1970s, and was a steady hand at the wheel of his 27-foot rigid hull inflatable.

The gray whales have yet to arrive for the Pacific Rim Whale Festival (March 17-25) but we were barely out of the harbour when we

saw a seal, blue heron and bald eagle. We then headed further south to the Broken Islands as Congdon opened up the motors and gave us a true West Coast roller coaster ride.

You can hear the Stellar sealions before you even see them, and sometimes you can smell them first

too if you're downwind. Regardless, the big brutes are always a delight to see jockeying for position on the rocks or doing belly-flops into the ocean. There were even a few California sealions in the mix as well, discernible by the bumps

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A surfer takes a time-out at Long Beach to play with his dog as the waves roll in.



Noisy and a wee bit smelly, but always entertaining and spectacular to see in the wild, Stellar sealions jockey for "elbow room" on one of the Broken Islands.

# Ucluelet

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on their heads and their barking.

Even without the wildlife, the scenery is gorgeous throughout the Broken Islands, and we scouted out areas for a future kayaking/camping trip. The day came to a glorious end as the sun “melted” into the great Pacific, and we cruised back to town for dinner at the Driftwood Patio Restaurant.

There were a few full tables on this quiet Friday night, but this narrow, two-storey restaurant is hopping in the summer, as thousands of tourists and part-time residents fill up the little town.

The crab cake appies were tender and yummy, served with a red pepper jelly sauce. And after a day on the water, we opted for more seafood: prawns and rock crab claws. It was decent, simple fare, served with a smile, and the decor is definitely West Coast beach-inspired – a good place to take the family.

The Driftwood is contrasted with the Boat Basin Restaurant, located across the harbour at Tauca Lea Resort & Spa. On Saturday, we were given a tour of the six-year-old resort by general manager Volker Grady who said one of the key reasons their investors chose Ucluelet, over Tofino, was because the community had committed to improving its infrastructure and had a good plan in place for long-range growth.

He also pointed out that more big developments are coming in the next few years, including the Wyndansea Oceanfront Golf Resort, with the course designed by legendary pro Jack Nicklaus.

“There are certain projects I want to do, and this is one of them. This is a piece of property that is absolutely gorgeous, you couldn’t find a better looking site anywhere in North America. To have the opportunity to do golf course on this land, to work with this environment, to work with nature, the ocean, the trees, the rocks – it’s an opportunity that you just can’t pass up,” said Nicklaus on his website.

However, golfing will have to wait a few years. In the meantime, we were wine and dined at the Boat Basin where chef Richard Norwood uses organic, locally-grown produce and fresh seafood.

After a day of hiking and exploring, I opted for the “hungry-man” Alberta beef main course and wasn’t disappointed. It was perfectly cooked but I couldn’t help but envy my better half’s choice of grilled tuna. She raved for the rest of the night about the tuna and the “to die for” reduction sauce.

After one more night of comfy and quite rest at the Ebb Tide – where you can just hear the din of the open ocean – we spent the morning watching the surfers near Incinerator Rock on Long Beach. Who knew there could so many surfers in January, but the waves and weather were perfect on this Sunday.

Alas, it was time to head back to the east coast of the Island. We ran smack into the fog at Kennedy Lake and Port Alberni was still glum. However, the vivid memories of our Ucluelet trip kept our spirits bright in spite of the grey day ahead.



Picturesque Ucluelet Harbour and fishing boats with Tauca Lea Resort & Spa in the background

Paul Rudan/Mirror Staff



The view to Spring Cove from a private room at the Ebb Tide Bed & Breakfast, located across the road from the gorgeous Wild Pacific Trail.

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