

White Rock Pass ©1997 Holly Arntzen

As you travel north up the Salish Sea, past Campbell River and through Johnston Straits...the coast is riddled with these deep inlets. Bute Inlet, Kingcome Inlet, Rivers Inlet, Knight Inlet are long mountain fjords that stretch up to the north east, bordered by steep mountains. In the winter the cold Arctic air drops down to the south and whistles down the inlets. The icy outflow winds can be hurricane force at times.

Stuart Island is located right at the mouth of Bute Inlet. The tidal ocean waters flood north through Johnston Strait and then up Bute Inlet. When the tide changes six hours later, it ebbs south. All the waters are squeezed through narrow channels that become white water foaming rapids. The Yaculta Rapids, White Rock Pass, Hole in the Wall are like rivers that change direction four times a day. Great whirlpools open up. When you're in a small boat, you don't want to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. You time your passage to be at slack tide, or when the tide has just turned and is going in your direction. These waters and islands are the most beautiful, spectacular places on the planet. I would look up to Estero Peak gleaming white in the winter sun. Or at the Rendezvous Islands to the south, lush green little jewels floating in an emerald sea. Wildlife abounds—Orcas, eagles and big Tyee salmon.

In 1996, we were at the end of an era. A decade earlier Stephen and I had sold our beloved hand-built house and lush stream-fed property on Cortes Island and moved to Vancouver. We invested every cent we had into our music, formed the Artist Response Team. We believed that music was a powerful way to reach people with messages about nature and educate about ecology. We had some great successes. But surviving as self-employed artists paying rent in Vancouver, and navigating the treacherous waters of intransigent banks and insufficient funding got the better of us.

We answered an ad for someone to caretake and manage Arran Point Lodge. When we got the job, with a monthly salary and house (whaaat???) It felt to me like the hand of God had plucked us out of the heat and hate of the city and transported me to the wilderness that I had been singing about. In the wintertime, when there were no guests, I would go to the Lodge and play the grand piano and look out at the Arran Rapids. That's how this song came to be.

