

# Dennisse Cutts, Notary: Queen of the North!

Born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Dennisse Cutts was raised in Downey, CA, between LA and Disneyland. As a legal assistant for Christopher Wingham Law Corporation, a small office in Vanderhoof, BC, she sometimes served as janitor, bookkeeper, computer geek, and office manager. As executive administrative assistant to the owners of the Gang Ranch (outside Williams Lake, BC, the largest cattle ranch in North America), her duties encompassed determining costs for the golf course and pool, cooking for branding crews, chasing cows, driving tractors, and acting as tour director for visitors, including The Marlboro Man, there to shoot commercials.

When her husband Dan Gray was transferred from Vanderhoof to Abbotsford in 1989 with CIBC, she worked for Baker Newby and Norquist Davies in Abbotsford. For a change of pace, Dennisse joined a vet clinic in Clearbrook, where Notary Sally O'Sullivan was a favourite client. On the move again with the bank, she and Dan headed to the True North Strong and Free: Fort Nelson.

"Once here, we bought a local express company and I became the Loomis-UPS-Fed Ex Queen of the North," says Nisa, her pet name.

**The Scrivener:** *How and why did you become a BC Notary Public?*

**Dennisse:** When Dan and I moved to Fort Nelson (BC's most northern

incorporated town, and the source of your natural gas for heat!), there was only one lawyer in town, who really wasn't a legal beagle at heart and soon left. Once people heard I had worked for a lawyer, I was inundated with Statements of Adjustment and Leases; the local folks would ask for plain English translations of legal documents. So the Courier Countess went back to school, and became a Notary in December 1986.

**The Scrivener:** *Your Notarial practice is in Fort Nelson. What attracted you to set up shop in that area?*



**Dennisse:** The area sort of chose me because there was absolutely **no** legal representative of any kind here. I am the only person with any legal recognition for over 1,000 miles. (The nearest lawyer to the South is in Fort St. John; there isn't another one until you get to Whitehorse, Yukon.) Dan and I truly love the lifestyle in the North—even with the alienation of the geographically challenged bureaucrats of the south—and decided early on that we were staying here. Because the Fort Nelson Notarial Seal was vacant, I moved in.

**The Scrivener:** *What is the most satisfying aspect of being a Notary Public?*

**Dennisse:** Since we are so small a community and area, I feel I am helping *my family* when doing things for clients. It is one of saddest and hardest things to tell them the things I am not allowed to do for them because of the legal restrictions Notaries face. I am appreciated by my clients because my being here saves them the four-hour trip (one way) to a lawyer's office, and some of them are afraid of legal "stuffiness." I feel honoured that some clients feel comfortable enough to call me at home with an emergency, or when they just need some reassurance about something. My clients and the town are very protective of me and totally supportive which, in a sometimes cut-throat business world, is very humbling.

**The Scrivener:** *That community sounds like an absolutely fabulous place to live and work. How are you giving back to your community, in the way of public service?*

**Dennisse:** I am the "Welcome Visitor" queen of the Town of Fort Nelson. We run a visitor-tourist program during the summer travel months for people on their way to Alaska and the Yukon. I have done it for seven years now, and have built a good reputation with lots of the tour companies; I've received a trunkful of wonderful stories, memories, and new friends from the thousands of people I meet each summer. I even found my long-lost relatives from Wisconsin who came on the tour! Small world.



At the local community college, I offer public awareness classes, such as why you should have a Will, and things you need to know when buying or selling a house, etc.

**The Scrivener:** *What hobbies or leisure activities do you enjoy?*

**Dennisse:** My hubby and I have two great mutts, and we love to camp. Last

year, I got Desert Wind, my most wonderful horse. He and I are in training for our first Endurance Ride. We are aiming for 25 miles, then will work up to 100 miles in one day. (DW will be fine; I will need an ambulance!)

I am one of the local gardening fanatics. Our former home in the town was on the Northeast Garden Home Tour. Wedding photos were taken in our yard every summer. Now we have 4.5 acres of “fresh” canvas—no gardens of any kind—to start over again. My poor husband is frightened but the garden centre is anticipating a banner profit year. But with a horse and a new miniature donkey, Archie, at least fertilizer won't be a problem. When I am not riding or gardening, I am in my art studio releasing the stress and tension of doing Notary stuff, or I am playing my guitar and singing with a great bunch of other bush people.

**The Scrivener:** *What is most important to you in life?*

**Dennisse:** My family. I love where I live,

I enjoy my job, and have been blessed by the most wonderful people, of whom I am a part—and the people I joined when I found this wonderful man who has taught me what a joy and wonder it is every day to just “be happy sucking air.” So, I try to keep things in perspective—not get too crazed when the files are piled high and I still haven't lost that last 100 pounds—and say “thank you” for not being cold, frightened, homeless, hurt, or alone. I have a *Great* life! ▲

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