



Carmen Langstaff: One of a Family of Mentors



In Desolation Sound

Carmen Langstaff was born in Abbotsford and lived there to age 15.

“When I was just starting grade 11, my parents moved us to Kelowna. Moving away from family, friends, and my childhood environment was tough but our parents were very encouraging—and they bought me a horse!”

Kelowna has been home ever since.

“I am most fortunate to have been so close to my grandparents for the first part of my life. They all came from Russia, escaping to Canada during the Revolution. That experience made them very tolerant, patient, and remarkably nonjudgmental. Those attributes rubbed off on my parents and I hope they rubbed off on me. I often think of my grandmothers and remember how kind and gentle they were. My mom and dad also set a very good example for my older brother Tim and me.”

When asked about her career aspirations, Carmen says that as a kid, she wanted to be a veterinarian. “I’m pretty sure ‘the circus’ fit in there somewhere, too.

“My first job was for Dad in his insurance agency where I did odd jobs. When I was about 20, a gentleman named Mel, my dad, and I got together to open a small coffee shop. Back then, good jobs were tough to come by so having my own business seemed like a good idea.

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“I worked awfully hard for a very small paycheck but there were other rewards—most notably the people I met. The coffee shop was a gathering place for seniors. I spent hours each day interacting with individuals who had had very interesting life experiences. I still see people from the coffee shop; some are now my clients.

“I also was a bartender and worked for many years with a physiotherapist.

“While enrolled in the Notary program, I worked with my dad Ernie Janzen and my brother Tim Janzen in their Notary practice. Being around a family of Notaries, it was a natural progression for me. I have been a

Notary since 1998—I can’t believe it’s almost 10 years. I knew I wanted a career that involved interaction with people on a daily basis. The nature of this work fits with my thinking patterns.

“The plan was to take over Dad’s practice when I was commissioned but, as the Notaries know, he still hasn’t retired. Instead, I took over a Notary practice at the other end of town. It’s very satisfying to have been in practice for long enough to have developed a repeat client base and to know they trust my work enough to keep coming back.

“I am very fortunate to have Tim and my dad as mentors. Now all three of us share office space so we can bounce ideas, solutions, questions, and answers off each other.”

Carmen says the Notary Society is very special, in part because of its size. “I wouldn’t hesitate to call on any number of Notaries with a question I might have. Because I know the value of having someone to talk to, I have made myself available as a mentor, which has been very rewarding. I learn much from the students and the new Notaries because there is always a fresh way to look at a situation and new ways of doing things.



Dana, his daughter Amy, and Carmen out on horseback

“The best part about being a BC Notary is the opportunity to help people. It is satisfying that people are comfortable coming to me for their home purchase or sale, for a Will, or simply to ask a question. Even if I can’t help them, I can point them in a direction where they can get the appropriate advice.

“Kelowna is beautiful, visually and otherwise—an amazing place: the people, the wine, the food. I can’t

say enough positive things about where I live. The lake is clean, the weather is fabulous, skiing is close by, and there are numerous golf courses!

“Starting in Spring, you can ski in the morning and golf in the afternoon. I enjoy the great outdoors—skiing, running, horseback riding, camping, and fishing. I took up golf a couple of years ago but am really quite terrible at it because I don’t have the time to go out very often. We try to play 9 holes with my mom and dad at least once a week in the Summer.

Dana and I lost our home in that fire but we gained so much from the experience.

“We live in the midst of wineries and vineyards in Kelowna, in the area of the city that was involved in the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Park Fire. Dana and I lost our home in that fire but we gained so much from the experience. The community really came together—family, friends, and neighbours—it was really quite amazing.

“The BC Notaries very generously contributed to the replanting of my garden, which was pretty much stripped by the fire. As an avid gardener, it was really important to me



Carmen's garden coming back to life after the fire

to get the planting started. It’s been almost 5 years and the garden grows bigger and better every year.

“Dana and I spent 3 weeks in Italy in October. I would like to travel more but that will have to wait because my practice keeps me very busy and it doesn’t look like it will slow down in the near future. We enjoy having animals around us. We have had chickens, a horse, and the usual barnyard pets—the dog and the cat. We are down to the dog and the cat right now but are rebuilding the chicken coup so by late Spring, we will have chicks again. In the past, the chickens have had the run of the property but I’m getting older and not wanting—broom in hand—to chase off the coyotes who run after my chickens. The chickens will have a proper fence this time.

“Kelowna is growing at a phenomenal rate which makes for a very busy Notary practice. I hope the future holds changes for Notaries in that we will be able to do more for people. Time will tell. In the meantime, I will enjoy what I do and do it the best I can.

“My health, my friends, my happiness, and the happiness of those around me are all important to me but most significant is my family. I feel fortunate to have them all nearby. It is imperative to remember there is life outside our practices and that we need to spend time with family and friends.” ▲

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Carmen and Dana at St. Peter's square in Italy