

A Future Life With Improved Internet

This is an attempt to illustrate island life if our homes all had fibre cable internet service.

Here's a representative cast of characters we may find living across Denman and Hornby Islands. Anna's a part-time teacher, potter and quilter, and her partner Don works as a faller sometimes, otherwise subcontracts. Daughter Danielle attends George Vanier and loves her mandolin, while her younger brother Philip is keen on sports, mainly basketball. Margaret and Harriet, both in their 80s, are active travellers and Margaret has health issues. New Canadian Gretchen has an MSc in Biology and works on the BS Con (ferry), while husband Sid is a geological engineer. Their daughter Lorraine is a pre-schooler. Shelagh is a retired librarian who paints (water-colour) while Bart, a retired mortician, does some fishing, wood-working and loves cooking. Cathy works where-ever she can, keeps a big garden and raises a few animals for sale. Her son Alphonso is starting the architectural technology course at BCIT.

Sid is up before dawn for an online meeting to integrate sample data from his geo-tech team's fresh drill-holes in Khazakstan with the company mainframe in Salt Lake. Sid's geo-analytical model runs computers in the three locations to feed mega-bytes of data back and forth in milliseconds. Gretchen is up to feed the animals before the interactive sessions of her two online courses, veterinary science and early childhood education. Lorraine and her grandmother from Stuttgart are on Skype, reading German folk tales together. The family recently converted from summer to fulltime residence here because the new fibre service allows Sid to get away from his Vancouver office and work from home.

Don has a seven o'clock online job interview with an Edmonton contractor. Meanwhile, Anna is scanning the job boards at Comox Valley schools, hoping to fill-in today, and that she can still get over there on an early boat. Philip is streaming a key game from the FIBA World Cup in Melbourne between a very tall Slovak team and Canada's U-18 men. Danielle and several friends are having an online chat over photos and videos taken during their performance last night at the Open Stage. They often practice remotely, thanks to their online multi-channel "garagejam" program. As Don leaves his tablet after the interview, he reflects on how fibre internet allows their family to engage in all of these data-intensive activities simultaneously!

Margaret was up most of the night. Yesterday she consulted a doctor online through Island Health and was diagnosed. Medical equipment was dropped off at her house and she received online coaching allowing her to connect to online heart, pulse and nerve monitors. These 24/7 connections are live with a specialist department of the Comox hospital. The new regime kept her awake so she spent the night watching travel videos and streaming exchanges with buddies all over the world. In the next room Harriet watched Netflix, snoozed and kept an eye on her friend.

Bart is on his laptop going through this week's grocery specials. He places orders with Thrifty's and The Superstore that will be delivered by mid-afternoon. Shelagh checks her tablet to see

where the island bus is on its circuit and texts the driver to divert from the mainroad route to pick her up at the end of her driveway.

The garden club will be meeting at midmorning, online. Cathy is in her garden preparing for it by harvesting colourful beans she grew from seeds that Harriet brought her from Anatolia. Alphonso is midway through an online CAD course, and his current assignment involves computations interacting with a data hog, a mainframe geomatics computer.

That evening, Anna, Don, Gretchen, Margaret, Bart and Shelagh will use their computers to interactively stream the monthly DIRA meeting, deciding on community activities. With connectivity, DIRA has become much like Athenian democracy from a few millennia ago.

Universal fibre-optic service on our islands will allow all of this activity to occur along one street simultaneously, and everywhere else on the Islands too. Reliably. Inexpensively. And this capability will replace a great deal of physical travel that now consumes time, money and energy.