

# Creating an Accessible, Supportive Home for the Hunt Family

## *Background - November 2012*

### **The Family**

Pauline has been a Revelstoke resident since 1996. Simon was posted as a Park Warden at Mt. Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks in 2001. They were married in 2003 and have two young girls, Emily and Madeline, who are 7 and 5 years old. Simon currently works ¾ time at Parks Canada and beginning in January 2013, he will begin a part-time contract as the City of Revelstoke's Emergency Program Coordinator. Pauline has operated her own graphic design company since 1996 and was also employed in the forest industry for over 10 years. Both have been active volunteers in the arts, health and forest-related aspects of our community.



### **The Diagnosis**

When she first noticed the odd twitches in her muscles in 2009, Pauline sought the advice of her physician. After a battery of tests she was told that she had Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), known as Lou Gehrig's disease, an incurable progressive neuromuscular disease that eventually causes full paralysis. Her neurologist advised her to "quit your job and go do all the things you've always wanted to do while you can." So the Hunt family embarked on a year-long set of 'adventures' to create lasting memories to share with their children in the years ahead. They had the support of this community, friends and co-workers nation-wide, who began a fundraising campaign to enable the family to realise their dreams.

ALS is a debilitating illness that requires costly patient care in the later stages of the disease. Patients with ALS become progressively paralyzed due to degeneration of the upper and lower motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord.

### **The Team**

With Pauline and Simon we have built a team including Cindy Pearce, Gregg Walker, and Ian Brown co-workers and friends who are experienced in fundraising and logistics, as well as Tuulikki Tennant, Geoff Battersby and Pam Doyle, citizens who are known for getting things done. We have been working with local building contractors and draftspeople on the design and costing to create a modest, decent home for this family.

### **The House at 419 6<sup>th</sup> Street East**

Built in the 1930s, the Hunt's home is a simple rectangle of 850 square feet evident of a working class home from that period. It contains one bathroom and two bedrooms; all of which are too small for wheelchair accessibility. The entries to the house are 42" off the ground and require either a lift or long ramp for wheelchair access. Staying warm is critical to Pauline's health, and the home has very poor insulation and expensive natural gas heat. The family has started to improve the energy efficiency with new windows, and they added a wood stove in 2011.



## Family Needs

Based on input from health professionals, the Hunts' home will need to meet a wide range of needs including wheelchair accessibility, transfer supports, cost effective heating, large main bedroom with modified private bathroom to accommodate future equipment and care needs, an additional or one larger bedroom for the girls, a bedroom for a live-in caregiver (recommended by the health professionals and important as the Hunts have no family in Revelstoke), separate public bathroom, and an accessible, open concept kitchen and space for family activities .

Based on these needs and the condition of the house, the project team has been told by several experienced builders that the most cost effective option is to add a second floor to the home, with an elevator. The team has explored whether the family should attempt to sell this home and purchase another that would only require renovations for accessibility. The family needs to stay in the downtown area within walking access to schools and Simon's workplace, and to retain the option for Pauline to make independent wheelchair trips downtown. The team has reached the conclusion that the best option at this time is to renovate the house. This has been verified with an experienced real estate agent. This option also allows the family to maintain some level of constancy in their lives while so much is changing.



## A 'Quilt' of Funding Sources

The team has researched a number of funding sources ranging from government, foundation and private options. Unfortunately, the situation the Hunts face is not addressed by any one source. The team is creating a 'quilt' of funding sources that together will finance the home the Hunt family needs. The Royal Bank Foundation has already contributed \$10,000 to this project. A key aspect of this quilt is working with Habitat For Humanity Kelowna to bring their programs to Revelstoke while creating a modest, accessible home for the Hunts. The Revelstoke Community Housing Society is sponsoring this pilot of Habitat's programs in our town.

## Moving Forward

In the fall of 2011, the team focused on modifications to the house to take the family through the winter safely and as comfortably as possible. Since then, the team has focused on exploring viable building and design options and worked with the Revelstoke Community Housing Society and Habitat for Humanity Kelowna to craft a memorandum of understanding. With house designs now almost complete, the team will launch the project publicly in late November, followed by fund raising activities over the winter. As early as possible in the summer of 2013 the Hunt family will move out of the house and the renovation will begin. The family will be back in their home well before the winter of 2013.

## Hunt Family Commitment to Paying It Forward

One of the dreams the Hunt family has is that their efforts will benefit their community. As a Habitat for Humanity project, the Hunt family is required to contribute a minimum number of hours to the project and repay a substantial loan. This loan will be used to support future Habitat projects in Revelstoke.

***Please consider supporting this family as a Habitat for Humanity pilot project***

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