



PEACE OF MIND FOR AN ACTIVE RETIREMENT

SHEILA WYSE RETIRED TEACHER, WILLIAMS LAKE, BC

Sheila Wyse enjoyed a 20-year career as a teacher in Williams Lake, British Columbia, coming into the profession once her children had left home to go into higher education. She is now retired in the city having taught in a number of local schools and raised her family in the community. After contributing to her pension through her career she is enjoying her retirement in the city and is keeping busy as a volunteer in the community thanks to the stable retirement income she receives.

MAKING WILLIAMS LAKE HOME

Although classed as a city, Williams Lake is small with just over 10,000 residents. Located in the interior of British Columbia, the town began to grow rapidly in the Cariboo Gold Rush of 1860 and was named in honor of Secwepemc chief William. It became a hub for forestry and mining, sitting on the Pacific Great Eastern Railway which is now a CN rail line.

Williams Lake resident Phyllis Webstad established Orange Shirt Day to raise awareness of the impact of the residential school system. This day has subsequently grown to become the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour the lost children and survivors of residential schools with people wearing orange shirts to mark it. Williams Lake is also the hometown of Canadian icon Rick Hansen, who has spent his life promoting accessibility and inclusion around the world.

Originally from Vancouver, Sheila moved to Williams Lake with her husband when he got a job as a teacher in 1969. Once their children had grown up Sheila decided to follow their path into higher education, learning through night school and summer classes at what was then Cariboo College. She became a teacher at 38. Over a 20 year-career she taught grade 1 children in the town and from the surrounding rural areas, teaching at six schools, and being inspired daily by the energy and imaginations of the children she taught.

“My grandmother relied on her children and my mother worked hard but never had much pension security in old age. Financial security has always been important to me, and it allows me to do things in the community like volunteering.”

RETIRING IN THE COMMUNITY

Sheila and her husband are two of the 100,000 retired teachers living in British Columbia. By having a stable, secure pension she can continue to play an active role in the community. She remains a teacher, but now volunteering at the Elder College, teaching seniors how to use technology, including mastering iPads to help them stay in touch with family members and access information and other services online. She also volunteers at the Garden Club and Music Festival, among many other roles, and is probably busier now than ever. Sheila also hopes to travel, spending time retracing her Metis history by visiting where her grandparents lived in the Prairies with her daughter.

PENSIONS AND WILLIAMS LAKE

In retirement Sheila often meets friends at the Bean Counter Bistro before picking up books from the library next door. She is also a regular visitor at the Gecko Tree Cafe, famous for its cinnamon buns. She also shops for gifts locally, including at the Station House Gallery which provides a sales channel for local artists. Sheila and her husband have built up a collection of works by local artists, weavers, and potters. These businesses and artists are supported in part by retiree spending in the community.

There are 265,000 retired public servants in British Columbia who spend their \$7 billion in annual pension income in their communities. For every \$10 in pensions paid it generates almost \$16 in economic activity, with rural communities receiving a higher benefit per person than urban communities. Retiree spending supports 110,600 jobs in the province, \$4.4 billion in annual wages, and 7,000 mainly small businesses. Retiree spending also provides \$2.8 billion in tax revenue which helps pay for public services like libraries and elder centres in communities like Williams Lake.



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