

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO SCHOOL AT DAVIE BAY

While today's students are leaving school this June, the two Davie Bay children in the photo are watching their school leave THEM!

It was 1952 and their newly-built schoolhouse sat awaiting the high tide to be floated north to the Gillies Bay townsite where it was needed more. Texada Mines had just opened and was hiring locals, many from Davie Bay, who relocated there.



Davie Bay's population had always fluctuated according to local forestry job opportunities. The Yank Camp had flown fallers up from Oregon but also employed a few locals. In 1947 the Gibbs brothers barged their logging operation there from Denman Island. In addition, about two dozen brush pickers resided in the bay working with Carl Hagman (Senior) who shipped their salal to Vancouver for floral arrangements.

By 1949 there were enough children receiving home schooling to warrant a permanent schoolhouse. Parents hosted dances and raffles to raise the funds. Volunteers worked with a professional carpenter on loan from the school district. Building the school had become a community project for the families employed by the local outfits.

Providing schooling had always been difficult at this remote location. The Devaney family with their seven children settled Davie Bay in 1924 and depended on bi-weekly, often stormy, rowboat crossings 12 miles to Lasqueti Island to pick up their next correspondence lessons. (More on the Devaneys next month)

After the 1950's Davie Bay lay quiet but sprang to life again in the 1970's. About two dozen people in seven families sought an alternative, independent lifestyle and constructed homes along the shore from local materials.

By 1979 ten children were receiving home schooling which prompted the building of a new schoolhouse out of recycled material. However, in 1983, residents were forced to vacate when land owner, Genstar, declined to renew their dollar-per-year leases and bulldozed the cabins.

For the moment the bay is peaceful once more.

What of the "floating" schoolhouse? It served as the first school in Gillies Bay until the community outgrew it. The building was then hauled to a waterfront lot as a summer residence. In the tradition of Texada recycling, portions of the old Davie Bay School still survive, the lumber now incorporated into (late) Peggy Atkinson's garage.