



Port Alberni: More Than Just a Mill Town

Jan Peterson

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Any community that has ever been labelled a “mill town” carries both the promise of prosperity and the constant threat of collapse, its fortune hinging on a single industry whose performance is as much related to the whims of a global economy as it is to the abundance of a key natural resource. The people of Port Alberni, located deep in Vancouver Island’s Alberni Valley, know all too well the highs and lows that come with such a label.

Jan Peterson, who lived in Port Alberni for two of the town’s most tumultuous decades and worked as a reporter for the *Alberni Valley Times*, describes how the town’s people persevered through three decades of boom and bust, developed a vibrant arts and sporting community, and strived to make life better under any circumstances. From the prosperous 1970s, when Port Alberni earned the reputation of “forestry capital of Canada,” to the decline of the industry in the 1980s, when economic uncertainty signalled a need for diversification, to the environmental protests in nearby Clayoquot Sound, which polarized the community, *Port Alberni* tells the town's story from a perspective that is rarely heard. Through fascinating interviews and meticulous historical research, Peterson captures the heart and soul of a town so often defined by dollars and cents.

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