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Myra Mumchuck - a true Seldovian!

by Mary Glover



Myra Mumchuck

It's a beautiful Spring day in Seldovia. The warm sun is breaking through the crisp morning air. Standing in the sun it feels so warm, but at the same time, if one would stand in the shade of the Sitka pine tree, one would swear it was 10 degrees colder! I am at the Seldovia airport and here comes Myra Mumchuck waiting for her cousin to come in on a single prop Cessna 206. [This is airport life in Seldovia—you get to stand and wait for your plane. There are no ticket counters, no searches, AND you get car-to-airplane door service! Of course, you might get to walk into town too!]

Myra is a true native of the Seldovia area. She has seen many changes in her lifetime and can tell many stories--- and unlike some storytellers, Myra's stories are all so very interesting. Myra will tell a story displaying a delightful sense of humor. Whenever she tells a story, there is the story, but it also has an underlying point. She may tease you too, but with the teasing comes something to think about. I asked Myra what she wanted to do today and she said, "Get started picking Baidarkas. Today is low tide, a -5.6, and I'm anxious to get on the beach."

Myra's family moved to Seldovia in 1960 when she was ten years old. They moved from Seldovia in 1966 "after Momma died." Myra has lived through the times when the natives were mistreated. She told me of the time she accidentally spoke in her native tongue and she got her hair pulled, was slapped and then her mouth was washed out with soap. All this happened before she even realized that she had spoken a language other than English. Her parents were then sent a letter by the teacher. Then there was the time later in her life when she actually went to battle with the Bureau of Indian Affairs trying to get into school. Finally she was placed in a school in the lower 48—in California. Myra wanted to go to school in Alaska, not California. However, she went to California and studied cooking and became a beautician. She did not sit for a California license as she wanted to return to Alaska where her family was. She did acquire the skills of those professions. Myra said that "things are better today."

Myra returned to Seldovia in 1976 and would go back and forth to other places in Alaska. Then in 1993 Myra began living in Seldovia full time. Myra has one adult son, Charles, who is with her at this time in Seldovia. Her friend and companion is Pete Wilbur and together they are working part-time on a building in

Baidarkas (aka Black Chiton (*Katharina tunicata*)).

Myra was born in [Portlock, Alaska](#). She was born into a family of 11 children. When I asked her what it was like to grow up in such a large family her response was: “Hell!”(– then a big laugh!) These are the names of her siblings in the order as born: Anesia, Elizabeth, Margie, Junior, Victor, Myra, Steve, Patsy, Kathy, Matt, and Gina (Lila). It was traditional in the family that the eldest helped with the younger siblings. This roll even prevented some of the older children from attending school. Myra was held this responsible position from 1960 to 1965.

Port Graham. Pete and Myra live on Shoreline Drive in Seldovia. Myra’s favorite activities are: cooking, knitting, crocheting and working cross word puzzles. She said she used to love to fish but can not do it right now due to pain in her knees. But today Myra was excited and she had on her big boots and she was ready for the beach with her family! When asked who her relatives are, Myra responded, “The whole village of Port Graham and English Bay!” Myra by heritage alone is a true Seldovian!



Myra and Pete at a Senior Auction dinner in Seldovia.

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