

A GIRL NAMED SIMILKAMEEN

If I ever have a little girl, I am going to name her Similkameen.... At the age of five, I was captivated by a complete sense of magic that overcame me around the headwaters of the Similkameen¹. As my parents and I would then follow the river, descend into the valley, and continue traveling through, my heart remained with the river, with the valley.

Words could not describe the stirrings inside me. I was mesmerized. The best way I was able to try to share this sense of awe and wonder was the thought that I may be able to capture, convey and communicate these sentiments by giving a child I might one day birth the name of this special place. By naming a daughter Similkameen, my five-old mind was marrying the qualities of a child with those of the Similkameen: wonder, mystery, fragility, strength, freedom, wildness, beauty, movement, spirit, enchantment...magic. I did not know what Similkameen officially meant, but at the same time I *knew* exactly what the name meant.

Then and there, I announced out loud to my parents, and I remember it clearly to this day that it was my intention to bestow the name of the name Similkameen to a future daughter. And that is exactly what I did.

On April 13, 2001 Similkameen Shannon O'Rourke was born at home on Lasqueti Island, British Columbia.

Her name accurately captures the magnificence of her being: at times wild and frenzied, at times calm and peaceful; possessing a balance between

¹ The Similkameen River and Valley are in British Columbia.

strength and determination, and tranquility and pensiveness. Above all: a unique child, with a unique name.

We do not live in or near the Similkameen, but my daughter holds a special connection, unique to herself, to the place of her namesake. To this day, the same stirrings, the same strong, yet indefinable connection overwhelms me whenever I first see the Similkameen River.

The First Nations of the Similkameen are the *People of the Eagle*. In our home on the coast, eagles circle us, and come to rest on an old snag beside the cabin where Similkameen was born. The connection extends beyond the place, beyond the name, and into the essence.²

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Biographical Information:

Bronwyn Preece is in the process of completing a BFA in Applied Theatre at the University of Victoria, where she is melding her interest in personal reflection, ecological and social action with that of engaged dramatic discourse. Bronwyn is generating her own approaches to the exploration of social issues using drama and embodied improvisation as a means of reconnecting to Earth. She calls this avenue of work **EarthBODYment**.

Having a daughter sparked a shift towards writing for children. ***The Gulf Islands Alphabet*** (September 1, 2010) is being published by Simply Read Books.

Creating outlets for meaningful social dialogue also led Bronwyn to 6 consecutive years ('02-'08) in local politics as an elected member with the Islands Trust: the municipal-level government for the Gulf Islands region of British Columbia, Canada: North America's first government working under

² This piece was published in the small newspaper (with a circulation of less than 1600 copies) 'The Similkameen News Leader' in March, 2010.

an environmental mandate.

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