

Laura North

GUIDING PEOPLE TOWARD CLARITY IN PARKSVILLE

By Brian Cullingworth

Photography by Dave Graham, Laura & Amy North

“When you meet Laura North, the first thing you notice is steadiness”.

She doesn't rush conversations, and she doesn't fill silence unnecessarily. Instead, she listens fully the way someone does when they believe answers already exist within the person sitting across from them. That belief sits at the centre of Laura's life and her work, and it's what ultimately led her to Parksville.

In January 2025, Laura moved from Vancouver to Vancouver Island, choosing a smaller community over the pace of city living. She wasn't looking for retirement or escape. She was looking for alignment, a place where daily life matched her values. You hear it in how she describes the change. Vancouver had familiarity and history, but it also had momentum, schedules, traffic, constant movement. Parksville offered something different: room to notice. Not just scenery, but people, conversations, and time. The ocean became her reference point. The smell



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of salt air, the sound of gulls overhead, and the steady rhythm of tides were never background details to Laura. Walks once taken along Spanish Banks are now replaced by Rath Trevor Beach, Qualicum Beach and the shoreline near Craig Bay. She didn't abandon routine she reshaped it. Kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding are becoming regular activities rather than occasional escapes. Beachcombing is less about collecting and more about paying attention, sand dollars, small crabs, and tidal pools that reward patience. She has even created a Vancouver Island waterfall bucket list, not to check off achievements but to invite connection, hikes with friends, conversations along trails, shared discovery. Gradually, Parksville stopped being a place she lives and became a place she participates in. She joined the Chamber of Commerce, sits on her strata council, and continues meeting neighbours she now calls friends.

"For Laura, community isn't proximity. It's involvement".

CREATIVITY AS REFLECTION

The quieter pace of Parksville has made space for something long present but often postponed creativity. Laura set up a studio in her home and is beginning to

work with stained glass, mosaics, painting, knitting and crafts. But what draws her most is kintsugi, the Japanese practice of repairing broken pottery using gold lacquer. The appeal isn't artistic alone. It reflects how she interprets life. Kintsugi doesn't hide brokenness, it incorporates it. The repaired piece becomes stronger and more meaningful because the break is acknowledged rather than disguised.



There is beauty in imperfection. She relates to that idea personally and professionally. In conversation, she often returns to the same principle: the parts of life people want to move past quickly are often the parts that create direction and hold value. She doesn't frame challenges as lessons or hardships to overcome. She treats them as information details that help someone understand

who they are becoming. Creativity, for her, is not separate from coaching. Both involve observing patterns, stepping back, and allowing shape to emerge.

WHERE HER WORK BEGAN

Before coaching, Laura worked with children, and that foundation still shapes how she works with adults today. After graduating from Crofton House School, she completed Montessori AMI training and an early childhood education certification. She spent three years as a Montessori preschool teacher and five years teaching pre-kindergarten in an early literacy program. Her philosophy formed early: children learn best when they feel safe and respected. Academic progress follows emotional confidence, not the other way around. She remembers taking students outdoors during autumn and teaching them to distinguish deciduous from coniferous trees. Parents were impressed by the vocabulary, but Laura noticed something more important, the children felt capable. That observation stayed with her. People don't grow because they're told what to do. They grow when they are encouraged to think for themselves and supported to take risks and create their own identity. This eventually led her beyond teaching to coaching.

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Who do you need to become to achieve it?

What action can you take today?

She encourages sharing the answer with someone else as accountability strengthens commitment.

EXPERIENCE INFORMING PERSPECTIVE

Laura's coaching is shaped as much by life as by training. At nineteen she faced Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Later came infertility struggles and loss, health challenges from the radiation treatment, and eventually a divorce after 35 years of marriage. She doesn't present these events dramatically. Instead, she describes them as experiences that taught patience, faith in the face of uncertainty, and a grateful perspective. The kintsugi metaphor returns here. Resilience isn't returning to who you were before struggle. Life is about always transforming and discovering more of who you are. It is like adding chapters in a book rather than starting the book over and over trying to get it right. This understanding allows her to sit comfortably with people during uncertain moments. She doesn't rush people toward optimism or solutions. She gives space for truth and clarity to reveal itself to light the way.

FAMILY INFLUENCE

Laura credits her two adult children as the most influential teachers in her life. Her daughter after graduating from UVIC now works supporting youth facing housing and harm-reduction challenges, showing that advocating for the oppressed is not something you do, it is a way to live. Her son, a former Junior A hockey player in the BCHL is now pursuing sports and media photography. He

DISCOVERING COACHING

In 1999, Laura encountered the emerging profession of coaching. What drew her was its focus on self-discovery rather than advice. Coaching's guiding principles is to hold others as creative, resourceful and whole; nothing is broken just a being to be discovered. Laura trained with the Coaches Training Institute and became one of the first certified professional coaches in Canada. Soon after, she founded True North Coaching. For more than 25 years she has worked with individuals exploring direction, careers, relationships, life transitions, and purpose. Her role is not consultant or strategist. She doesn't provide solutions. She helps people identify their own. Her approach is consistent: focus on the person before the problem.

She recalls an executive who arrived seeking financial guidance before a real estate negotiation. Instead of discussing numbers, Laura asked what reputation he believed he had and what reputation he wanted. From there the conversation shifted, preparation, communication style, presence, and intention. The meeting later went exactly as hoped. The change didn't come from strategy. It came from clarity. Laura often invites people to ask themselves these types of questions:

What do you want?

What makes that important to you?

What is in the way?

What story are you telling yourself about it?

How might that obstacle help you?

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demonstrated resilience, success measured by recovery after setbacks and is now committed to living his beliefs and values while chasing his next dream. Through them she sees the same pattern she witnesses in clients: fulfillment comes from lived values, not external expectations.

COACHING IN PRACTICE

A typical conversation with Laura rarely feels like a structured session. You talk about a career decision and end up discussing identity. You start with a practical question and leave with a clearer understanding of priorities. She doesn't steer the outcome; she guides the thinking. Her role is to notice assumptions and ask questions that reveal them. It is curiosity over judgement. She believes many people already know what matters but struggle to articulate it. Once named, decisions become simpler. This is why she offers complimentary introductory sessions. The partnership only works if the person experiences clarity firsthand. Coaching, to her, is collaborative not instruction.

LIVING IN PARKSVILLE

Parksville supports the way Laura works. She walks beaches instead of commuting. She attends local markets and is looking to join creative groups. The environment reinforces patience, tides change slowly, seasons visibly shift, and conversations are unhurried. She believes meaningful change also happens gradually. Rather than major reinvention, she encourages small consistent adjustments: one honest conversation, one clarified priority, one deliberate choice. In a world that often feels overwhelming, she narrows focus, improve the space directly around you. Help a neighbour. Offer attention, create laughter, give a hug.

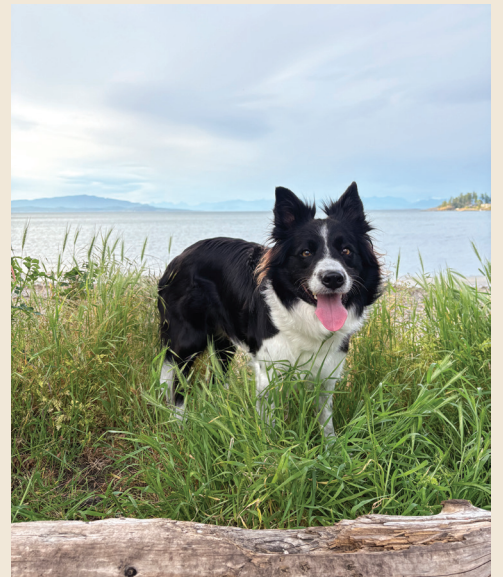
Laura's favourite quote is by Mother Theresa:

"Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love"

A QUIET CONCLUSION

Laura North didn't move to Parksville to start over. She moved to live in alignment with what she already practices, listening carefully, participating locally, and helping others recognize their direction. When you leave a conversation with her, you don't receive a plan. You leave with perspective. For Laura, that is the goal: not telling people where to go but helping them recognize they already know. And in that recognition, change becomes possible steady, personal, and lasting.

Laura offers a Complimentary Coaching Session to anyone who is seriously considering a coaching partnership and can be contacted at: laura@truenorthcoaching.com



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