The disquieting thoughts of *Is this it? Is this all there is?* surfaced constantly in my mind, but I didn't share them with Sue. I swept them under the bedroom carpet in the spare room where I hoped she wouldn’t find them. It was déjà vu time for me all over again. Fifteen years after my first aha moment, and here I was, no nearer to finding that elusive inner happiness that I felt was out there. Why was I not ecstatically happy with this idyllic retirement situation? Perhaps what I yearned for didn’t exist! Maybe it was unrealistic of me to expect more. Would I never reach a point in life when I felt truly content?

Winter visited us early with its bountiful gifts of white, but it overstayed its welcome by at least a month. We used the opportunity to visit family and friends and our world was perfect. At least that's how it appeared to others. Spring arrived, thrusting her way up through the frosted garden, with gifts of sunny yellow tulips, cold white snowdrops, and hopes of warmer days. We toiled on the land from sun-up to sundown cleaning up the debris left by winter’s long visit.

One bright, crisp early morning in April, I was on the deck daydreaming and gazing mindlessly at the last chunks of ice floating down the Rocky Saugeen River. I’d pick out a slab and follow it, watching it bob and swirl in the eddies, and then shrink and break up into smaller pieces, which then got sucked into the main current, swept downstream, and out of sight. And then I’d pick out another slab and follow its journey until it too disappeared. Ice was so fleeting I thought: here one minute, gone the next. Its impermanence struck a chord. And from the deep recesses of my brain bubbled a startling observation. “So too was life!” That was it. That was the epiphany I needed. I could see it all so clearly now: we only have so many days of life and by evening every day we have one day less! My brain went into overdrive, my body temperature soared, and I panicked. I felt feverish. A flurry of thoughts and emotions swirled around in my head, all at the same time; regret for days wasted in not fully realising the importance of this; anxiety for the limited time left; and confusion about what to do about it. These flashes filled up every cavity in my brain, and a sense of urgency consumed me. I went down to the big pond, sat on the snowy bench, and stared at the rippling icy waters: lost in wonderment of fleeting ice and life. I must have been there for over an hour before my mind cleared, and my body sensibilities returned to normal. And then I had another “aha” moment. We must look for a new adventure: a journey of discovery and travel. We needed to find something extraordinary; something with a personal challenge and an edge to it. I had a sense that if I followed my intuition and forgot about logic and practicalities, I would find the inner peace and joy I craved. There was no time to waste. Life was too precious.

**\*\*\*image 13.jpg (Fleeting ice)\*\*\***

**\*\*\*image 14.jpg (The big pond)\*\*\***

**Chapter 3: Awakening in the Northwest Territories**

**Dream Job in Canada’s North**

Changing one's perspective can turn one's beliefs inside out in the wink of an eye. What an about face from a year ago when we were convinced we'd be in our house for life. Now that we'd decided to look for a new adventure, it no longer mattered that we'd have to sell the property and move. Our new mantra was – been there, done that – now let’s move on.

We considered options. We wanted something different yet challenging, novel and fun. Maybe working overseas, say in Nepal or Africa, might be the answer, but before we went to that extreme, we wanted to see what there was in Canada. Maybe a little business in Newfoundland might want someone to run things for them, or perhaps an organization in northern British Columbia could use our skills.

Qualified searches on the Internet flushed out many interesting job prospects, usually in the more remote regions of Canada. I applied for positions in the Maritimes and British Columbia, but I didn’t get one positive reply. Ageism was alive and well in Canada that was for sure. Some jobs contained elements of what we wanted, but none smacked of being “the perfect job” until Lutsel K’e blipped on the radar.

The Lutsel K'e First Nations Dene band was looking for a General Manager to look after their business affairs. The listing read that Lutsel K’e was a fly-in community, located on a lake in the Northwest Territories. The prospect of living in an isolated community with a bunch of Indians in Canada’s far north was bizarre; yet there was a fascinating mystique to it.

The atlas showed Lutsel K’e to be located at the east end of Great Slave Lake, and north of the 60th parallel. I’d never looked that closely at a map of Canada’s north before. I thought Edmonton was in the far north, and the only place north of it of any significance, were the oilsands at Fort McMurray, until of course you reached the Arctic, but I’d no idea what lay in between, nor just how big that "in between" was. It was huge.