

Finding a Home in

By Wendy Haaf

Moncton

Marché
Moncton
Market.

Biking on
the riverfront.



Capitol Theatre.



Acadian
Museum.



During his 35-year career in radio and a seven-year stint working for the New Brunswick government, Doug Pond and his wife, Karen, lived in multiple cities, but Moncton, their hometown, drew them back so frequently that while looking at Pond's resumé, one of his former bosses asked what the attraction was. "It's a beautiful city to live in," answered Pond, who finally retired to Moncton about five years ago. "It's got everything."

Susan Crawford and her husband, Brent, also returned to Moncton to retire after many years in the Greater Toronto Area. For them, a major part of appeal of the city of 71,000 nestled in the Petitcodiac River Valley is its welcoming atmosphere and laid-back vibe. "It was the way of life we were looking for," Susan says, noting that not only do residents say hello when passing on the street, but drivers stop for pedestrians even when there's not a stop sign in sight.

The affordability of housing here (in 2016, houses averaged \$160,774, according to Canadian Real Estate Association figures) wasn't just high on the Crawfords' list of criteria—

half of the proceeds from the sale of their Ontario house, "moving here freed up a lot of capital for us," Susan says.

Set in the heart of the province, with an area population of roughly 141,000 (including the neighbouring communities of Riverview and Dieppe), Moncton is also a hub for shopping, health care (the city has two hospitals, one French and one English), culture, transportation (it has an international airport), and education. Its bilingual identity and post-secondary community also contribute to a cosmopolitan flavour and an inclusive, progressive nature. And yet, you can get anywhere in the city within 20 minutes by car.

A community college, two universities (and another within 40 minutes' drive), and Tantramar Seniors' College offer a wealth of opportunities for lifelong learning. Rich Aboriginal and Acadian histories add to a vibrant sense of culture, which is reflected in museums, live theatre, and concerts (venues include a new multi-event centre, a casino, and the outdoor Magnetic Hill Concert Site, past host to such artists as The Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen).

Moncton is also home to a cultural centre that houses many

it allowed them to retire earlier than they otherwise would or could have. With a new, custom-built home costing just

Photos: City of Moncton.

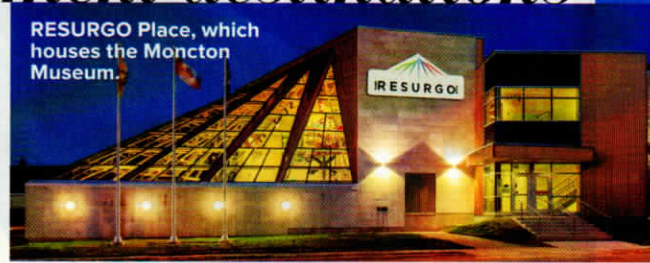


Crossman Community Centre-Kay Arena.

retirement destinations



Magnetic Hill.



RESURGO Place, which houses the Moncton Museum.



Mosaic Multicultural Festival.

PHOTOS: CHRIS LAMARQUE/REASON (Kouchibouguac) and Louis Barnes (Bay of Fundy); New Brunswick Department of Tourism, Heritage & Culture/Kevin Snair (Hopewell Rocks); City of Moncton (others).

artists and 20 organizations, galleries (including one devoted to First Nations art), the Moncton Public Library's Makerspace (defined on the library's website as "a place where people gather to share resources and knowledge, learn new technology, build new skills, work on projects, network, and make pretty much anything!"), more than two dozen pieces of public art, and the week-long Inspire public arts festival. Other events featured throughout the year include the Acoustica free summer concert series, the Atlantic Nationals car show (which coincides with Rotary Ribfest), and the Atlantic Motorcycle and ATV show. Over the years, Moncton has also hosted world-class events, such as world curling championships and an international francophone summit.

"There's also the Moncton Wildcats, a Quebec Major Junior Hockey League team," Susan Crawford points out. "It's good hockey because these are 16-to-20-year-olds who hope to make the NHL—and some of them do. There's basketball, as well."

A newly opened 8,500-seat downtown entertainment and trade-show facility attests to the city's ability to successfully reinvent itself despite the successive departures of several major employers. "That seems to be generating a lot of new hotels, restaurants, and housing units," Doug Pond says of the new facility. "Moncton doesn't ever die or get old. We've always had forward-looking business leaders."

On the food front, the area is replete with different types of restaurants, wineries, and microbreweries, as well as the Marché Moncton Market, a downtown farmers' market that features more than 130 vendors. Dining options are particularly good for seafood lovers, and there's a lobster festival each year in nearby Shediac, a half-hour drive away and home to one of North America's finest beaches.

The city clearly values its elders, too. For example, the mayor has a senior advisory committee that routinely provides suggestions for older people (such as adding extra benches along park paths) and an education and accreditation program for senior-friendly businesses. "We also have a Seniors' Information Centre and a Seniors' Club," adds Greta Doucet. And for retirees who are interested in donating time and energy

to an organization but need help matching an opportunity with their skills and interests, "there's a volunteer registry," Susan Crawford says.

Fitness aficionados can avail themselves of the facilities at an excellent YMCA, take classes at the Moncton Lions Centre for seniors, and participate in activities ranging from tennis and lawn bowling to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing at one of the city's parks (which encompass several thousand hectares). During warmer months, the Crawfords golf at least a few times a week (their condo backs onto a course). Whether you enjoy hunting, fishing, camping, or just lounging near the water, Moncton and the surrounding area provide a virtual outdoor playground. The area is also a place of great natural beauty, from the golden sand dunes and salt marshes of Kouchibouguac National Park, where you can spy on a grey seal colony from a voyageur canoe, to the red-brown flowerpot stone formations at Hopewell Rocks in Fundy National Park.

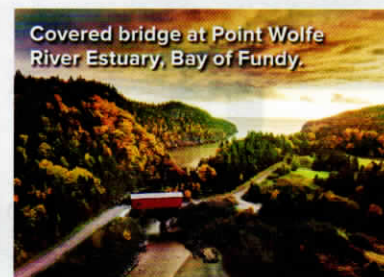
"There are birdwatching groups, and there's rock and fossil hunting all along the Fundy," Greta Doucet says. "The Petitcodiac, our chocolate river with its tidal bore, is now bringing surfers, plus it has a walking trail on its edge." Miles of other walking trails thread through Moncton and connect it with Riverview and Dieppe.

Do the Crawfords miss living in a major metropolis? "We went to Toronto to work," Susan says. "We've come back to Moncton to live." ■

Kouchibouguac National Park.



Hopewell Rocks.



Covered bridge at Point Wolfe River Estuary, Bay of Fundy.