

## ***Sustaining the Islands – Community Stewardship Awards Program***



# **Islands Trust**

## **2013 Nominee Profile**

### **Ana Miriam Leigh (Posthumous), Denman Island**

<b>Category:</b>	Individual
<b>Project:</b>	Twenty years of support to women facing violence on Denman Island
<b>Nominator(s):</b>	Denman Island Women's Outreach Society
<b>Letters of Support:</b>	N/A

#### **Project Description:**

Ana Miriam Leigh established the Denman Island Women's Outreach Society (DIWOS) in 1993 in response to the lack of services for women experiencing violence on Denman Island. Ana knew that people in crisis without counseling, safety, housing and economic sustenance for themselves and their children could not fully participate in the decisions affecting their lives. Her aim was to help women and their children to be self-sufficient, self-caring, and secure enough to be full citizens. For more than 20 years she was the unpaid co-ordinator and main force driving DIWOS projects. She engaged more than 200 women in projects as employees, volunteers and participants, and reached out to countless more community members. Over the years, Ana secured over \$500,000 in grants to provide community programs such as:

- the Denman Island Women's Outreach Society crisis line;
- crisis work training on how to find safe housing, undertake safety planning for women and their children, and how to support women through the medical, legal and court processes;
- Theatre of the Oppressed workshops to help women develop skills for economic and personal survival;
- projects that explored what keeps women in violent relationships; and
- projects that supported women to develop a business plan and put it into action.

Ana also helped the Denman Island community to collaborate and communicate. She organized non-violent communication (NVC) forums and workshops and promoted the use of NVC in community meetings and projects to resolve conflict. She also liaised with police, doctors, social services and other agencies to improve response to gender-based violence on Denman Island. As DIWOS closes in 2013, a new group is emerging to continue working for equality for women and girls on Denman Island; carrying on Ana's legacy.