

Sustaining the Islands – Community Stewardship Awards Program



Islands Trust

2017 Recipient Profile

Denman Island Memorial Society

Category:	Organization
Project:	Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery
Nominator(s):	Roxanna Mandryk

Description:

The Denman Island Memorial Society (DIMS) was formed in 2009 to provide a 'green' cemetery for the residents of Denman Island and their immediate families. After six years of planning and design work, community consultation, researching regulatory requirements, fundraising, land development and construction, the Denman Island Natural Burial Cemetery opened in October 2015. The cemetery follows the principles of green or natural burial, which is an approach that returns human remains to the earth in their natural state with little or no impact on the environment. The cemetery has room for 1,000 graves, and is intended to meet the Denman Island community's needs for the next 100 years.

A conservation covenant on the cemetery site, held by the Denman Conservancy Association, protects the land from toxic chemicals, metals, fertilizers and herbicides used in conventional cemeteries. The land is left undisturbed after being used for burials to allow the native vegetation to return and the area to eventually become a Douglas-fir forest.

The DIMS employs a part-time cemetery manager and provides opportunities for islanders to make biodegradable coffins, shrouds and shrouding boards. The cemetery allows islanders to keep the remains of a recently deceased family member in their own community and to provide a more gentle approach to after-death care.

The cemetery addresses climate change by promoting growth of native ecosystems, discouraging cremation, and avoiding greenhouse gas emissions associated with the transport of remains to funeral homes on Vancouver Island.