

Sustaining the Islands – Community Stewardship Awards Program



Islands Trust

2022 Recipient Profile

Ruth Waldick Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area

Category: Individual

Project: Building Lake Maxwell's Watershed Resiliency and Forest Fire Resistance

Nominator(s): Bryan Young, Chair, Transition Salt Spring

Project Description: Dr. Ruth Waldick is a champion for and key organizer of a collaborative climate action project to build Lake Maxwell's watershed's resiliency and forest fire resistance by protecting forest health. Ruth has brought together diverse organizations to develop and initiate this flagship climate adaptation project to protect and restore Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystems on Salt Spring. With her leadership, the joint project has attracted world-class researchers and scientists, many of whom are donating their time, and has received federal government funding, as well as a donation from a private donor.

Guided by Dr. Waldick, project field work began in December 2021 with fieldwork teams developing techniques and templates that will be applied to other areas on Salt Spring Island in 2022-2023. Ruth has also developed a larger knowledge-transfer strategy that will share the results of the selected ecosystem interventions with target audiences that include professionals from conservation groups, local government, First Nations, and large private and public landowners/managers from across the region.

This project supports implementation of the 2021 Transition Salt Spring Climate Action Plan 2.0. Ruth was a key volunteer for the development of the Climate Action Plan 2.0, and also served as lead author of the plan's forests chapter, which lays out a science-based action plan for building climate resilience in forest ecosystems. The project to build Lake Maxwell's watershed resiliency and forest fire resistance will provide a technical roadmap for island communities on how to effectively protect and restore forests across the Coastal Douglas-fir zone, and protect against the impacts of climate change.¹

¹ Information based on nominee's submission to 2022 Islands Trust Community Stewardship Award Program.

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2022 Recipient Profile

Chris Straw
Gabriola Island Local Trust Area

Category: Other: Posthumous Award

Project: Advocacy Against Freighter Anchorages in the Salish Sea

Nominator(s): Debbie Cook

Project Description: Chris Straw is nominated posthumously for his impactful leadership in advocating against freighter anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands.

From 2016, until his passing in 2021, Chris was passionate about helping community members advocate to resist the establishment of new anchorages and to address the use of existing anchorages within the Southern Gulf Islands. He greatly expanded the reach and influence of Gabriolans Against Freighter Anchorages (GAFA). He led this work through extensive and strategic outreach. This included leading the development of new digital communications strategies for GAFA, community-based presentations, collaboration with environmental not-for-profit partners, and advancing a media strategy to raise public awareness. Chris engaged with politicians at every political level—local trustees, First Nations leaders, regional, provincial, and federal governments—to promote GAFA's position that freighter anchorages do not belong in the Southern Gulf Islands. Chris was a strong advocate for meaningful government consultation with First Nations about anchorages.

Chris laid the foundation for public understanding of the negative consequences of using the Southern Gulf Island coastlines as parking lots for freighters. He understood that islanders needed to speak with a common voice, and was instrumental in forming the South Coast Ship Watch Alliance. Chris was diligent in keeping public attention on the freighter anchorage issue, and he did so with humour and a steadfast belief that future generations are entitled to thrive in a protected environment. By the time of his passing, thousands of people had become aware of the freighter anchorages issue and the need to take action.¹

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2022 Recipient Profile

Jeannine Georgeson Galiano Island Local Trust Area

Category:	Individual
Project:	Leadership in Collaborative Stewardship
Nominator(s):	Andrew Simon, Jessica Hallenbeck, Keith Erickson

Project Description: Jeannine Georgeson is nominated for leadership in fostering collaborative stewardship. Jeanine has brought together diverse communities and people for the protection of the Salish Sea, the reconnection of histories, and the conservation of cultural practices.

As an example of her work, in August 2020, Jeanine began working with the Spirit of the Sxwo'le (SOS) Coalition to develop participatory mapping practices that weave together biodiversity, ecosystem mapping, and Indigenous perspectives to deepen ecological literacy and cultural relationships with place. Jeannine fostered connections between organizations as diverse as Indigenous-led NGO Whiteswan Environmental, Northwest Indian College, the Galiano Conservancy Association, Vashon Nature Centre, the Inclusive Design Research Centre, and the Institute for Multidisciplinary Ecological Research in the Salish Sea.

Jeannine has also played a coordinating role for *The Water We Call Home*, an exhibition that will open at the Yellowhouse Art Centre on Galiano Island in July 2022. This includes helping organize three large gatherings and contributing to furthering the education of Island residents in relation to environmental justice and Indigenous sovereignty.

Jeannine's approach to stewardship and cultural revitalization fosters reconciliation and strengthens multi-generational connections with places of cultural and ecological significance. Her extensive volunteer hours have led to increased capacity for multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and initiated long-term partnerships. Such strengthening of connections has led to a more inclusive culture of conservation.¹

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2022 Recipient Profile

Kees Ruurs

Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area

Category:	Individual
Project:	14 years of community service
Nominator(s):	Brian Lawson

Project Description: Kees Ruurs is being nominated for 14 years of community service, including efforts as a volunteer warden, board member, and chair of not-for-profit organizations on Salt Spring Island (SSI).

Through extensive volunteer work with numerous organizations, Kees demonstrates a strong commitment to preserving and protecting Salt Spring Island’s natural environment. As a former Parks and Recreation Manager (2008- 2012) he helped expand and promote protected public trail networks. As board member with the SSI Conservancy for five years, he helped direct the organization in protecting biodiversity through restrictive covenants and the acquisition and management of nature reserves. Kees’ current role with the Conservancy is volunteer warden of the Howard Horel Nature Reserve. Through this role, he has removed invasive species, installed trail signage, and planned and developed an extensive trail network, making the reserve accessible to the general public.

During his nine years on the Board of the Salt Spring Island Foundation (including three as chair) he led the organization through several key community initiatives, including water preservation projects, new pathways, a solar panel development and new school gardens. As current board member and vice chair of the Trail and Nature Club, he establishes and maintains hiking trails. Throughout his extensive involvement with community-based environmental organizations, he has dedicated countless hours over consecutive years. Kees has encouraged many other people to volunteer and he has facilitated collaboration among organizations for the good of the community.¹

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2022 Recipient Profile

Keith Erickson Galiano Island Local Trust Area

Category:	Individual
Project:	20 Years of Ecosystem–Based Land Stewardship
Nominator(s):	Eric Higgs

Project Description: For over two decades, Keith Erickson has brought innovation and leadership to land stewardship on Galiano Island. In his role as a field biologist and then Executive Director of the Galiano Conservancy, Keith contributed to the restoration and protection of hundreds of hectares of ecosystems on Galiano Island. Protected areas include Laughlin Lake, the Great Beaver Swamp, Finlay Lake, Vanilla Leaf Land, and Cable Bay. Keith also played a pivotal role in the purchase of the 78 hectare waterfront property that is now the Millard Learning Centre. This centre has since become a learning hub for Galiano Island and the region, attracting thousands to its learning programs. As a board member (1999-2008) of the Galiano Island Forest Association, he co-developed “made for Galiano” forest practice guidelines to encourage ecologically responsible timber management.

Keith has mobilized hundreds of people in support of shared conservation goals. He helped develop partnership programs with the Penelakut First Nation, including for the Nuts’a’maat Forage Forest at the Millard Learning Centre. Penelakut elders and youth helped design the project and have contributed extensive traditional knowledge and documentation of plants with critical cultural value. Keith has also contributed significant additional community service, such as serving as an appointed member of the Galiano Island Advisory Planning Commission (2004-2012), appointed Chair of the Ecosystem Protection Committee for the Official Community Plan review (2009-10), and Chair of the Galiano Activity Centre Board (2012-2019)¹

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2022 Recipient Profile

Salt Spring Island Natural Cemetery Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area

Category:	Organization
Project:	Creation of a Sustainable Cemetery that Protects Forested Lands
Nominator(s):	P. Satya Jehman, Vedic Priestess Temple

Project Description: Salt Spring Island Natural Cemetery (SSINC) is a certified conservation green burial cemetery located in Burgoyne Valley, providing a sustainable burial option on protected forested lands. This is the first Certified Conservation Green Burial Cemetery open to the public in Canada. Since the cemetery's opening in 2020, there have been 18 interments. Salt Spring Island Natural Cemetery contributes to the Stqeeey' Learning Society to further the goal of strengthening cultural relationships to the land and water at Xwaaq'um Village.

In the Salt Spring Island Natural Cemetery, no chemicals are used in the bodies, caskets, urns, or landscaping. Only biodegradable materials are put into and on top of the ground. Engraved fieldstones are used as headstones. Native plants are used in the natural restoration of burial areas, to support local biodiversity. In a natural burial cemetery all graves look alike, and all return to the natural forest. Conservation and protection of the natural wild habitat is central to the cemetery.

The 5.5 hectares of cemetery grounds are protected in perpetuity through a provincial Certificate of Public Interest on the property title, and the cemetery is licensed as a provincial Place of Interment. There is also a perpetual Care Fund that holds 25% of all moneys paid for plots, to support the future management of the cemetery and care of the land.¹

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2022 Recipient Profile

Will Husby Bowen Island Municipality

Category:	Individual
Project:	30 years of Environmental Leadership
Nominator(s):	Bowen Island Conservancy

Project Description: Will Husby is nominated for 30 years of environmental leadership on Bowen Island. He has served as a keystone contributor to a long list of community organizations and successful community-based projects. This includes his role as an active board member on the Bowen Island Nature Club (1992-Present), Bowen Eco-Alliance (1993-Present), Bowen CAN (Community And Nature) (2019-present), Bowen LIFT (Linking Islanders through Friendly Transportation) (2019-present), Island Pacific School (1997-2009), Technical Advisory Group, Bowen Island Conservancy (2020-present), and Bowen Island Municipality’s Environment and Climate Action Advisory Committee (2018-present). Will is also a member of the Bowen Island Marine Stewardship Partners working group.

As a professional heritage interpreter, biologist, nature photographer, illustrator and graphic designer, Will brings a range of skills to each organization and project. Will has freely shared his knowledge, enthusiasm, and curiosity for the natural world with islanders of all ages. Will has led over 150 Bowen Nature Club discovery walks (1992-present). In addition, Will is co-author, photographer, and graphic artist for *Exploring Bowen’s Marine World: A Marine Atlas* and for *Discovering Kwílákm*, a web-based natural history guide to Kwílákm/Deep Bay, Bowen’s most visited marine area. He is also author of *Discovering Life on Bowen Island Beaches, Self-Guided Activities* (2021) and has served as a designer of entrance kiosk and interpretive signs/maps, including at Fairy Fen Nature Reserve and Quarry and Headwater parks. Through his over 30 years of work as an educator, scientist and mentor, Will has infused a culture of environmental stewardship across Bowen Island. ¹

¹ Information based on nominee’s submission to 2022 Islands Trust Community Stewardship Award Program.