Islands Trust Council

Indigenous Relations Action Plan
2026 – 2028

Contents

Islands Trust Council 1

Indigenous Relations Action Plan 2026 – 2028 1

Islands Trust Council's Declaration on Reconciliation 3

Acknowledgement 4

Organizational Purpose of this Plan 5

Introduction 5

Policies and regulations underlying Islands Trust Council's cooperation with Indigenous Peoples 8

Long-Term Outcomes 9

About this Action Plan 9

Relationship to Islands Trust Conservancy Board and local trust committees 10

Goals and Actions by Areas of Organizational Focus, for 2026-2028 12

A. Governance 12

A.1. Governance structures, agreements and processes 12

B. Education/Training 14

B.1. Education/Training - Trustees and Staff 14

B.2. Public Education 16

B.3. Communication Practices - Using Coast Salish Languages and Art 17

C. Administration 18

C.1. Internal Procedures and Collaboration Frameworks - Building a Strong Administrative Foundation 18

C.2. Resourcing – More staff time for delivery of Indigenous Relations and Engagement 20

Reporting on Implementation 22

Conclusion 22

Appendices 23

Appendix 1: Truth Precedes Reconciliation 24

Appendix 2: Islands Trust Indigenous Relations Framework 30

Appendix 3: Terminology 32

Islands Trust Council's Declaration on Reconciliation

Islands Trust Council, on Gabriola Island, unanimously passed the Reconciliation Declaration on March 14, 2019:

The Islands Trust Council acknowledges that the lands and waters that encompass the Islands Trust Area have been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial and honours the rich history, stewardship, and cultural heritage that embody this place we all call home.

The Islands Trust Council is committed to establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Islands Trust states a commitment to Reconciliation with the understanding that this commitment is a long-term relationship-building and healing process.

The Islands Trust Council will strive to create opportunities for knowledge-sharing and understanding as people come together to preserve and protect the special nature of the islands within the Salish Sea.

Adopted: March 14, 2019 Trust Council on Gabriola Island

Acknowledgement

Islands Trust respectfully acknowledges that the lands and waters that encompass the Islands Trust Area have been home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. We are committed to Reconciliation and to working together to preserve and protect this ecologically, culturally, and spiritually significant region in the Salish Sea.

The Islands Trust Area is located within the treaty lands and territories of the BOḴEĆEN, Cowichan Tribes, K'ómoks, Lyackson, MÁLEXE̓L, Qualicum, scəẃaθən, səl̓ilwətaɬ, SEMYOME, shíshálh, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, Snaw-naw-as, Snuneymuxw, Songhees, Spune'luxutth', SȾÁUTW̱, Stz'uminus, ɬaʔəmen, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Wei Wai Kum, We Wai Kai, W̱JOL ̓EL ̓P, W̱SIḴ̱EM, Xeláltxw, Xwémalhkwu, Xwsepsum, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm First Nations.

Organizational Purpose of this Plan

This plan is meant to assist Islands Trust staff (including through coordination with Islands Trust Conservancy staff) and trustees by identifying the suite of available tools within our jurisdiction and specific actions that help us achieve success in advancing work in support of the outcomes identified in this plan which have been derived from Islands Trust Council's Reconciliation Declaration on March 2028, the *Islands Trust Act*, the *Local Government Act*, and the work with the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs regarding their statutory approvals.

Introduction[1]

The Islands Trust Area is situated within Coast Salish territory and sits at the centre of the many gathering places and villages of these strong and vibrant First Nations. Coast Salish Peoples have a spiritual connection to the islands and the waters of the Salish Sea, and have a vital, long-standing and future-oriented interest in the environment of their territories and treaty lands.

The Salish Sea Basin was one of the most densely populated regions in North America before European contact.[2] The Islands Trust Area contains thousands of Indigenous archaeological and cultural heritage sites, including village sites, burial sites, middens, cairns, petroglyphs, pictographs, culturally modified trees, fish traps, and clam gardens. These sites reflect the deep history and enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples in the region. However, many have been desecrated or destroyed due to settler development, resource extraction, and inadequate legal protections.

For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have maintained deep reciprocal relationships to the lands and waters of the Salish Sea, which sustain food systems, cultural practices, governance, and ways of life. However, colonization, land dispossession, racist behaviours, and restrictive land use policies have severely limited Indigenous access to traditional territories, impacting their ability to exercise inherent rights, maintain cultural practices, and pass on traditional knowledge. Despite these challenges, Indigenous communities continue to seek opportunities to reconnect with lands and resources through harvesting, stewardship initiatives, and land-based governance. Indigenous stewardship is essential to maintaining the ecological integrity of the region.

---

[1] This Indigenous Relations Action Plan is informed by past comments and advice of Coast Salish leaders and knowledge holders and staff of various Indigenous Governing Bodies with territory in the Islands Trust Area. It also builds on the contributions and ideas of former Islands Trust Senior Intergovernmental Policy Advisors Fiona MacRaild, Lisa Wilcox and Robyn Kefi, and a staff-wide process to seek input in 2022, facilitated by Gillian Nicol, former Program Coordinator and Narissa Chadwick, Island Planner.

It follows partial implementation of Islands Trust Council's 2018-2022 Reconciliation Action Plan.

[2] Ritchie, P. M., Ritchie, J., Blake, M., Simons, E., & Lepofsky, D. (2024). Settling the record: 3,000 years of continuity and growth in a Coast Salish settlement constellation. Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, 73, 101570. (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278416524000011)

Islands Trust Council acknowledges that Islands Trust is founded within a colonial framework that excludes Indigenous Peoples from land use decisions on their own territories. The establishment of Islands Trust in 1974 was done without recognition of the Indigenous stewardship, governance, and deep relational knowledge of the lands and waters that have been in place since time immemorial. Residential schools, forced removal, and colonial laws and restrictions of Indigenous governance and cultural practices have displaced and dispossessed Coast Salish peoples and disrupted their relationships with the islands and waters of the Salish Sea. The ongoing legacy of cultural erasure, neglect of ancestral sacred sites, and systemic disregard for Indigenous presence has caused lasting harm and mistrust. Meaningful Reconciliation requires truth-telling.

Islands Trust recognizes that reconciliation is an ongoing process of relationship-building and institutional learning. This includes reflecting on how existing systems, structures, and decision-making processes may unintentionally perpetuate colonial approaches or limit opportunities for Indigenous Governing Bodies to meaningfully express their rights, responsibilities, governance systems, stewardship practices, and interests regarding their territories and treaty lands.

Islands Trust Council respectfully acknowledges Indigenous inherent rights as protected under section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982. Islands Trust Council respectfully acknowledges Indigenous rights to self-governance and the expressed interest of Indigenous Governing Bodies in working toward co-governance of the Islands Trust Area. Islands Trust Council is committed to advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous Governing Bodies through ongoing discussion and recognition of these rights.

Islands Trust is committed to a distinction-based approach that honours the uniqueness of each Indigenous Governing Body with interest in the Islands Trust Area. This means recognizing that Indigenous Governing Bodies are not a monolith; each Nation has its own governance structure, laws, priorities, language, cultural practice, and relationship to the land and waters. Engagement must be grounded in respect for these differences, and guided by the protocols and self-determined approaches of each Nation.

Within the territorial context, it is important to be clear about the role, mandate, and limitations of Islands Trust, and also the specific tools we have to do the work. Islands Trust recognizes that reconciliation is not only about improving engagement within existing systems, but about building respectful relationships that create space for Indigenous Governing Bodies to express their rights, responsibilities, laws, governance systems, and interests in ways that may help inform and evolve future approaches to governance, planning, stewardship, and decision-making within Islands Trust Area.

Islands Trust is a special purpose government mandated to preserve and protect over 450 islands and surrounding waters in the Salish Sea, in cooperation with First Nations, and municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia, through:

- Land-Use Planning:
    - Creates policies and regulations for land and marine areas that respect the Islands Trust preserve and protect mandate.

- Regional Collaboration and Advocacy:
    - Advocates on issues important to the entire region in a non-regulatory way to preserve and protect the Trust Area for future generations.

- Land Conservation
    - The Islands Trust Conservancy works with people and communities to preserve and protect the unique ecosystems and culturally significant places in the Islands Trust Area. Since 1990, over 115 places across the region have been protected.

Building and maintaining strong relationships with Indigenous Governing Bodies is essential for meaningful engagement, informed decision-making, and advancing Reconciliation within the Islands Trust Area. These relationships are built on respect, and ongoing dialogue. Strengthening this connection requires consistent communication, collaboration on shared priorities, and logistical, and often financial, support to ensure accessibility and participation.

Informed by Indigenous Governing Bodies and Indigenous Peoples, Islands Trust is on a path of education and transformation. Indigenous Governing Bodies and Elders have shared some key concerns with Islands Trust that include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural heritage protection
- Loss of access to resources and harvesting areas
- Pressures on ecosystems
- Need for revitalization of language and culture
- Need for education about the past and current impacts of colonialism
- Opportunities and issues related to ecosystem restoration and recovery
- Need for co-development of planning and land use management and land protection processes with Islands Trust bodies
- Need for acknowledgment of Indigenous self-governance and inherent rights to be self-governing decision-makers within their respective territories, and to be stewards
- Need for implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)

Indigenous Governing Bodies have also stressed the importance of acknowledging the interdependencies between healthy communities and healthy ecosystems.

As a special-purpose government mandated to preserve and protect the unique amenities and environment of the Islands Trust Area, Islands Trust Council recognizes its responsibility to respect the rights, traditions, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.

Policies and regulations underlying Islands Trust Council's cooperation with Indigenous Peoples

The Islands Trust Council is required by legislation, and guided by policy (including our Reconciliation Declaration, internal policies, and advice from the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs) in relation to work with Indigenous peoples.

The following identifies those requirements and commitments:

- ***Islands Trust Act***
  - Section 3 Object of the Trust – is to preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, First Nations, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.

- ***Local Government Act***
  - Section 475 –requires that, during the development of an Official Community Plan (OCP), there be consideration of provision of one or more opportunities for consultation with organizations affected, and specifically mentions consideration should be given to whether consultation is required with First Nations.

- **Islands Trust Council's Declaration on Reconciliation**
  - The three main tenets summarized here (see above on page 3 for the full declaration) as the Islands Trust Council:
    - Acknowledges the Islands Trust Area as the traditional home of Indigenous peoples since time immemorial, and honours their history, stewardship, and cultural heritage
    - Commits to reconciliation through respectful, long-term relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
    - Seeks to create opportunities for knowledge-sharing and mutual understanding to help protect the islands within the Salish Sea

- **Islands Trust Council and Committee's Policy 6.1.1. – First Nations Engagement Principles**
  - Establishes three Engagement Principles:
    - Islands Trust is committed to becoming aware of what it does not know or understand about First Nations
    - Islands Trust is committed to proving sincere desire for reconciliation
    - Islands Trust is committed to integrating, where possible, activities that support First Nations reconnecting with the Islands Trust Area lands and waters

- **Guidance from Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs**
  - The Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs holds the duty to consult with First Nations where established or asserted Aboriginal and Treaty rights protected under section 35 of the Constitution may be adversely affected. The record of engagement with First Nations that Islands Trust provides to the Minister with bylaws submitted for approval helps with the assessment of the fulfillment of that duty. Provincial guidance is that when preparing bylaws for Ministerial review, Islands Trust should develop processes which demonstrate how it has:
    1. Prepared for Indigenous input with thoughtful assessment of the potential impacts on the environment, the community, and Indigenous Governing Bodies,
    2. Been clear about intentions and open and genuine in seeking input,
    3. Considered the perspectives shared and work towards consensus and collaboration in the policies where possible, and
    4. Responded to the community and to Indigenous Governing Bodies about what is reasonable, practical or necessary to include in the resultant proposed bylaws.

Long-Term Outcomes

Taken together, the regulations and policies listed above, and the actions in this plan, support Trust Council in making progress towards the following four long-term outcomes:

1. Islands Trust bodies undertake meaningful engagement to inform decisions, policies and regulations in a manner that works towards understanding and addressing the interests of both Indigenous Governing Bodies and the Islands Trust.

2. Rich history, stewardship, and cultural heritage is honoured and protected.

3. Mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are established and maintained.

4. Opportunities for knowledge-sharing and understanding are created.

About this Action Plan

In order to achieve the long-term outcomes identified above, the Islands Trust Council recognizes the need to commit to using available tools by adopting new ways of working and dedicating the time required to ensure that systems, processes and activities support this vision across the

organizational level. Trust Council also recognizes that budgets will have to be allocated strategically to support priority initiatives.

This plan is organized around three key areas of organizational focus:

- Governance
- Administration
- Education

Under each area of organizational focus there are supporting goals intended to clarify the Islands Trust Council's role in achieving the long-term outcomes through its tools and authorities. Each goal is then supported by action items with a timeline and budget estimation. Taken together, this plan is intended to:

1. Set out activities that will support and advance relationship building and cooperation within the existing legislative framework,
2. Support efforts to co-develop planning land use management, and land protection processes with Indigenous Governing Bodies within the Islands Trust Area, and
3. Respond to the generous guidance and teachings that have been shared with staff and trustees by Indigenous Peoples.

There are many tools available to the Islands Trust Council to advance the long-term outcomes listed above. Only a sub-set of tools are used for the priority actions listed in this two-year plan, but it is expected that Islands Trust Council will explore the full-range of its available powers and tools in the years to come to advance its reconciliation commitments.

It should be noted that this document outlines internal Islands Trust Council actions and priorities, and while it is informed by previous guidance shared, it has not been co-developed with First Nations. Islands Trust Council recognizes that meaningful reconciliation cannot be fully defined by the organization alone. Ongoing relationship-building with Indigenous Governing Bodies will continue to inform how this work evolves over time, including identifying opportunities to address systemic barriers, strengthen respectful engagement practice, and support Indigenous voices in matters affecting their traditional territory and treaty lands.

Relationship to Islands Trust Conservancy Board and local trust committees

While an Islands Trust Council plan cannot set out goals or actions for local trust committees or the Islands Trust Conservancy Board, there are important areas of commonality regarding Indigenous engagement, relationship-building, and reconciliation work across all Islands Trust corporate bodies. These areas include:

- Establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples
- Creating opportunities for knowledge-sharing, understanding and collaboration
- Acknowledging Indigenous inherent rights to self-governance and expressed interests in advancing co-governance within the Islands Trust Area

- Receiving, sharing and incorporating feedback from Indigenous Governing Bodies and Elders regarding interests, priorities and concerns
- Working towards shared reconciliation objectives, including the commitment to fostering mutually respectful relationships reflected in both the Islands Trust Conservancy Reconciliation Declaration and the Islands Trust Council Reconciliation Declaration

A collaborative approach between Island Trust corporate bodies will support coordinated, effective, and respectful engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies and help advance an internally cohesive approach to reconciliation across the Islands Trust.

The Islands Trust Conservancy is currently developing its 2028-2032 Plan, with a significant focus on developing and strengthening relationships with Indigenous Governing Bodies within the Islands Trust Area and identifying areas of overlapping interests. With the information gathered through that process, the Board intends to develop its own Indigenous Relations Action Plan.

Over the term of this 2026-2028 plan, local trust committees and the Islands Trust Conservancy will be using their own suite of powers and tools to advance relations with Indigenous Governing Bodies and respond to the rights and interests expressed. Islands Trust Council can support this work through provision of funding, and in the case of local trust committees, can exert its budget authority to prioritize funding to projects that respond to the rights and interests expressed by Indigenous Governing Bodies.

For local trust committees these powers and tools include, among others:

- Amending official community plans and adopting or amending land use bylaws,
- Decision-making on planning applications (rezonings, subdivision, development permits, development variance permits, temporary use permits, etc.),
- Heritage conservation and protection,
- Amending or adopting administrative bylaws, and
- Decisions and policies relating to bylaw compliance and enforcement.

For Islands Trust Conservancy these powers and tools include, among others:

- Decision-making about acquisition of new protected areas that protect ecological or cultural features and/or locations that Indigenous Governing Bodies wish the Islands Trust Conservancy to protect
- Management of protected areas (e.g. Indigenous languages/place names on signage, involvement of cultural monitors, consideration of harvesting, measures to identify and protect archeological and culturally important sites
- Decisions and policies relating to compliance and enforcement of conservation covenant violations or trespasses, unauthorized uses or environmental damage in a nature reserve.

Goals and Actions by Areas of Organizational Focus, for 2026-2028

A. Governance

Background:

Islands Trust Council may enter into agreements with Indigenous Governing Bodies but does not have a clear framework for Indigenous Governing Bodies seeking shared governance models that align with the principles of the UN Declaration and *UN Declaration Act*. To address this, Islands Trust Council has twice requested provincial review of the *Islands Trust Act*, to which the Province has responded that it expects Islands Trust Council to ensure that it has engaged in a meaningful way with the agencies and governments that would be expected to participate in, or be impacted by, such a review.

Within the existing legislative framework, Islands Trust bodies can work towards the outcomes identified in this plan including meaningful engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies about new ways of working together more closely.

A.1. Governance structures, agreements and processes

Goal Ensure governance structures/agreements/processes support ongoing understanding of the interests of Indigenous Governing Bodies, methods to address the interests, and promote strong relationship-building		
Action Items	**Timeline**	**Budget**
Engage with staff from Indigenous Governing Bodies to develop a **baseline engagement framework document** that records expressed guiding principles, interests of the Indigenous Governing Body, and the tools available to Islands Trust to address interests. The baseline engagement frameworks can be used to inform Islands Trust Area-wide priorities in project planning and application processing.	2026/27-2027/28	Staff time in 2026/27
Amend the **Islands Trust Policy Statement** to incorporate a requirement that local trust committees and island municipalities engage with Indigenous Governing Bodies on all bylaws that require Executive Committee or Trust Council review or approval.	2026/27-2027/28	Via 2026/27 project budget ($37,000) Business case may be provided for 2027/28
Negotiate, sign and celebrate **agreements** with interested Indigenous Governing Bodies to establish clear expectations for coordination, as needed.	Ongoing	$15,000 with funding from UBCM Community to Community grants as available.

Islands Trust Council to engage with Indigenous Governing Bodies, using a distinction-based approach, to **explore potential establishment of an Indigenous advisory or guidance group** that could support and inform future governance changes and requests for legislative change.	2027/28	Via business case for 2027/28
Work collaboratively with interested Indigenous Governing Bodies to identify opportunities to strengthen relationship-based approaches to land-use planning, stewardship, referrals, and governance discussions with the legislative scope of Islands Trust and to identify barriers within existing systems that may impact meaningful participation or respectful engagement.	Ongoing	Staff time
Support leadership-to-leadership meetings as needed.	Ongoing	$2,000 annually for honoraria/gifts, travel costs from Trust Council or LTC travel budgets
Develop **working groups/regular meeting schedule** with interested Indigenous Governing Bodies as needed, and support and provide financial supports for travel and meetings	Ongoing	Staff time Any travel to be paid from department travel budgets, which may need to be increased accordingly for 2027/28
Engage with the Province to analyse Section 7 of the UN *Declaration Act* to see how it pertains to Islands Trust Council, Islands Trust Conservancy, local trust committees, and Bowen Island Municipality	2026/27	Staff time
Identify **measures to monitor this plan's long-term outcomes**	2027/28	Staff time

B. Education/Training

Background:

To successfully implement this action plan and advance relationship-building, trustees and staff need knowledge and skills to engage meaningfully with Indigenous Governing Bodies and Indigenous peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action #57 calls upon all levels of government to provide education for public servants on Indigenous histories, rights, and governance systems. Many staff, trustees, and advisors have been socialized within a settler colonial framework, which can create barriers to respectful relationship-building. Training on anti-Indigenous racism and cultural safety is needed.

Through education and training staff and trustees can increase awareness and understanding of how colonial systems, policies, and decision-making structures continue to impact Indigenous Peoples and relationships with Indigenous Governing Bodies. Further, learning regarding Indigenous governance systems, stewardship responsibilities, and relationship-based approaches to engagement and decision-making will support productive and positive relationships.

B.1. Education/Training - Trustees and Staff

Goal

To foster a culturally competent and culturally safe organization by providing trustees and staff with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to:

- Unlearn colonial biases,
- Deepen their understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and governance systems

Action Item	Timeline	Budget
Develop general **orientation packages and orientation sessions** for new trustees, advisory planning commission/Board of Variance members, and staff	2026/27	Staff time
Develop **briefings summarizing the status of relationships with** applicable Indigenous Governing Bodies for local trust committees after the election	2026/27	Staff time
Provide **training and scripts to Chairs and staff** to support delivery of culturally safe meetings, and to provide support for responding to Indigenous-specific racism	2026/27	Staff time / Trust Council training budget
Update the **Islands Trust Identity Guide** and **Territorial Acknowledgement Guide** as needed	Ongoing	Staff time
Update Islands Trust Council's **Continuous Learning Plan** to include topics related to reconciliation, cultural safety, respectful engagement, and anti-Indigenous racism, and deliver training	Ongoing	$2,000 annually Via business case for anti-Indigenous

		racism workshops (2027/28)
Continue annual **educational emails** for Indigenous Peoples Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation noting events and resources to support continuous learning	Ongoing	Staff time
Review/update **annual employee development plans** to require cultural competency training and cultural safety learning, including specific training for Senior Planners who attend LTC meetings	Ongoing	Training to be paid from department training budgets Business case may be provided for 2027/28 to support organization-wide staff training
Provide one-to-one dialogue sessions with the Senior Indigenous Relations Specialist to discuss topics related to reconciliation, work, society, and other issues related to Indigenous understanding	Ongoing	Staff time
Consider the role of the **Islands Trust staff library** and enhancing it to ensure resources on Indigenous topics are available to all staff and trustees, e.g., Could continue to host Islands Trust library in Victoria and Salt Spring offices with books on Indigenous topics, and start a library for the Northern office.	Ongoing	Staff time with books donated
Finalize a **primer on Heritage Conservation Areas** and include in trustee and planner orientation materials to support protection of indigenous cultural heritage.	2026/27	Via base communications budget

B.2. Public Education

Background

The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report states that reconciliation is about "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country." To achieve this, every individual, family, group, business, cultural body, and level of government must participate.

In alignment with Islands Trust's preserve and protect mandate, Islands Trust Council can undertake initiatives to increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of history and heritage. This includes fostering meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities, promoting education, and supporting initiatives that highlight the diverse histories and cultures within the Islands Trust Area.

Goal To increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of Colonialism and Indigenous history and heritage, cultures and governance systems in the Islands Trust Area.		
Action Item	**Timeline**	**Budget**
Offer and support on-island public learning events related to connected to project work, history or heritage, such as film screenings with panel presentations, in two local trust areas/Bowen Island each year	Ongoing	$3,000 annually Grant funding may also supplement
Annually, if the program is funded, **advise Indigenous Governing Bodies and Indigenous-led non-profits of the opportunity to apply for grants in aid** for initiatives that increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the history and heritage of the Islands Trust Area	Ongoing	No cost to advise. Program subject to annual funding approval outside of this plan
Include presentations from Indigenous subject-matter experts in Stewardship Education Program or Climate Action Education Program webinars	Ongoing	Honoraria costs to be included in business case Program subject to annual funding approval

Upon request by Indigenous Governing Bodies **include materials on history and heritage in information packages** for new residents as appropriate to the local trust area in question (upon approval by Executive Committee)	Ongoing	Via communications budget
Develop and distribute information materials about heritage protection and related processes for display at offices, public meetings and engagement events, and for inclusion on the website	2027/28	Via communications budget

B.3. Communication Practices - Using Coast Salish Languages and Art

Background:

Coast Salish languages and art are deeply connected to the land, waters, and cultural identity of the Indigenous Peoples of the region. These languages have been spoken on these territories since time immemorial, carrying ancestral knowledge, laws, and teachings. However, due to the impacts of colonization, Indigenous Peoples were subject to laws and policies that restricted cultural expression, including prohibition of ceremony, practicing art, wearing regalia, and speaking Indigenous languages. These measures disrupted intergenerational transmission of culture, creating long-term barriers that continue to affect access to opportunities today.

As a governing body operating within Coast Salish territories, Islands Trust has a role in supporting language revitalization and ensuring that Coast Salish art is recognized and respected. By incorporating Indigenous languages into signage, greetings, and communications, and by displaying Coast Salish art in its spaces, Islands Trust can help foster greater awareness, appreciation, and normalization of Indigenous cultural expressions.

Goal Support the revitalization and visibility of Coast Salish language and art by integrating them into Islands Trust spaces, communication, and engagement practices in a respectful and meaningful way that is guided by Indigenous Governing Bodies.		
Action Item	**Timeline**	**Budget**
Ensure that, as part of orientation materials, **trustees and staff are provided with local Indigenous language resources** (e.g. First Voices) and are encouraged to learn to pronounce First Nations' names	2026/27	Staff time
Provide support to **Chairs and senior staff to learn greetings in a local language**	2026/27	Staff time
Provide funding for a **Coast Salish art piece in each office lobby/boardroom**	2026/27	Via Reconciliation action plan budget

C. Administration

C.1. Internal Procedures and Collaboration Frameworks - Building a Strong Administrative Foundation

Background:

Effective administrative processes support meaningful relationships, improve coordination, and support integration of Indigenous knowledge and governance perspectives into decision-making. By improving internal procedures and collaboration frameworks, Islands Trust can support Indigenous self-determination and build long-term relationships rooted in mutual respect and collaboration.

Goal To strengthen Islands Trust Area-wide administrative processes that support respectful engagement to preserve and protect Indigenous cultural heritage, and collaboration with Indigenous Governing Bodies within the Islands Trust Area.		
Action Item	**Timeline**	**Budget**
Establish a **staff Indigenous engagement coordination group** to align Islands Trust engagement processes, share information, and ensure a consistent and culturally-safe approach across all departments	2026/27	Staff time
Implement a **First Nation referrals action plan** which could include actions for continuous improvement of engagement, the updating of staff toolkits which may include procedures, primers of Islands Trust jurisdiction, checklists, templates, and a bylaw approval coordination flowchart, with a focus on continuing a relational approach	2026/27	Staff time
Develop a **guide for early engagement** with procedures, checklists and templates, with a focus on continuing a relational approach	2026/27	Staff time (may seek grant funds to support staff backfill)
Develop a staff procedure for the creation and implementation **of agreements with Indigenous Governing Bodies**	2026/27	Staff time
Develop and Islands Trust Council **grants policy** (financial assistance), and develop a template for grant agreement and staff procedures	2026/27	Staff time

Develop and populate a **contact relationship management database** with information relating to each Indigenous Governing Body (including information on their previously expressed interests), and develop staff procedure and training materials	2026/27-2027/28	Staff time
Develop a **staff procedure for sending and tracking correspondence** with Indigenous Governing Bodies	2026/27	Staff time
Develop a **records management procedure** related to Indigenous relations, and implement staff training	2026/27	Staff time
Sustain a **supply of blankets and gifts** for use at meetings and events, and develop a staff procedure to guide appropriate use	Ongoing	$500 annually
Develop a **staff procedure for handshake and blanketing protocols**	2026/27	Staff time
Work with Indigenous Governing bodies to acquire **improved archeological and cultural heritage mapping information**, and provide staff training on their use, and confidentiality restrictions	Ongoing	Via Gabriola Island OCP project in 2026/27 and future project business cases
Improve and finalize, through engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies, the **Archeological Chance Find Protocol** in consultation with Indigenous Governing Bodies	2027/28	Via future project business case
Facilitate sharing of mapping and data sharing information and develop a **model data-sharing agreement** that respects Indigenous data sovereignty	2026/27	Staff time
Develop procedures for bylaw compliance and enforcement staff regarding informing First Nations about site visits to locations of known concern	2026/27	Staff time
Facilitate **knowledge-sharing on best practices in Indigenous relations** with other levels of government, including regional districts, for example through continued participation in the Indigenous Relations Regional District Community of Practice	Ongoing	Staff time
Advocate for changes to the UBCM Community to Community (C2C) program to allow multiple Islands Trust	2026/27	Staff time

bodies to apply for, and concurrently receive grants and for First Nations to be able to receive funding directly		
Conduct **a review of the Procurement Policy** to align with relevant outcomes from the BC Government's Indigenous Procurement Initiative	2027/28	Staff time
Develop and maintain an inventory of local Indigenous service providers, including sectors relevant to Islands Trust Conservancy, for staff reference and engagement	2027/28	Staff time
Send letters of congratulations from the Chair following elections for Chief and Council, with consideration of it comes also from ITC	Ongoing	Staff time
Provide travel funding for Islands Trust Council representative to **attend ceremonial and memorial services** (Pre-approval required from Executive Committee)	Ongoing	$1,000 annually
Support **staff-to-staff relationship strengthening** with occasional in-person meetings with food.	Ongoing	$2,000 annually
Update policies or agenda templates to enable formal opportunities for First Nations presentations and engagement at Island Trust Council meetings and meetings of other Trust bodies	2026/27	Staff time

C.2. Resourcing – More staff time for delivery of Indigenous Relations and Engagement

Background:

Islands Trust operates within a complex governance landscape that has had challenges with prioritizing meaningful and coordinated engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies. At present, Islands Trust has 15 corporate bodies engaging with 27 Indigenous Governing Bodies across multiple concurrent projects, often led by different staff members working in silos. In recent years, the organization has taken on more projects and processed more development applications than can be effectively managed within existing staff capacity.

There is a clear and growing desire to align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the framework for reconciliation. However, this requires not just policy commitments but the transformation of governance structures, bylaws, and relationships, many of which were created within a colonial system that marginalized Indigenous Peoples. To support respectful Indigenous relations, Islands Trust must make institutional space

for this work—ensuring sufficient capacity, strategic focus, and alignment with Indigenous priorities.

There is a need to:

- Be pragmatic - Avoid overcommitting to initiatives that exceed staff's capacity, and recognize that relationship-building takes time.
- Focus – Focus available staff resources on projects where the interests of the Indigenous Governing Bodies' can be supported.
- Review and Transform Operations – Ensure Islands Trust operations are reflective of reconciliation commitments.

Islands Trust currently operates with a decentralized approach to Indigenous relations and engagement, where staff assigned to projects and referrals act as primary points of contact. This has resulted in a disjointed approach where Indigenous Governing Bodies have multiple Islands Trust staff to engage with, each with their own project focus, who are often unaware of the parallel engagements going on at the same time. Some Nations have noted that this lack of coordination and consistency in itself is undermining engagement because it results in duplication of effort and shows a lack of responsiveness to previously received feedback. The lack of centralized coordination has also resulted in a lack of consistency and documentation on the processes used in the referral process and during early engagement.

In recent years, the Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor has been the only position dedicated to supporting the Indigenous Relations activities at the Islands Trust, responsible for advising on agreements, training, policy/procedure development, liaison activities, correspondence drafting, referral coordination, event organization, etc. Resulting from the CAO's Operational Review report which states, "It is clear that Islands Trust needs to get its own internal operations more in order to support effective relationship building" Islands Trust Council has funded a new Manager of Indigenous Relations position, and a part-time Indigenous Relations Advisor for the Islands Trust Conservancy. These positions will form an Indigenous Relations team and will work together during the term of this plan, to develop a framework that enables a comprehensive and consistent approach to relationship building and engagement across Islands Trust, while also allowing for flexibility where needed to advance individual projects.

Goal

To ensure there are sufficient resources to uphold respectful and productive relationships with Indigenous Governing Bodies and to focus engagement efforts on priority initiatives.

Ensure the model for seeking engagement on projects, and general relationship-building, is appropriate, respectful, and efficient and reaches across all Islands Trust departments.

Action Item	Timeline	Budget

Review the staffing model for Indigenous relations to develop options for delivery of engagement requests in a manner that works better for Indigenous Governing Bodies	2026/27	Staff time
Prioritize resources needed to implement of Strategic Plan Key Initiative 1.1.2 "Work with Indigenous Governing Bodies to **co-design and implement future Policy Statement amendment review processes** that ensure ongoing and more regular review and amendment of the Policy Statement."	2027/28	Business case to be provided for 2027/28.
Establish a **staff Indigenous engagement coordination group** to align Islands Trust engagement processes, share information, and ensure a consistent and culturally-safe approach across all departments	2026/27	Staff time
Establish a **referrals staff working group** with a regular meeting schedule	2026/27	Staff time
Recognizing the progress that has been made in operationalizing Indigenous relations and the goals and actions in this plan, **assess possible impacts of updating local trust committee Reconciliation standing resolutions**	2026/27 (pre-election)	Staff time

Reporting on Implementation

Staff will report on the implementation of the actions in this plan to Islands Trust Council every six months, and through a description of Reconciliation activities in the annual report.

Conclusion

The intent and commitment of this Indigenous Relations Action Plan is a willingness to work in new ways and to take the time needed to align systems, processes, and activities at an organizational level. Taking responsibility for reviewing methodologies, having conversations, and developing new processes and policies are key to change management. Realizing that relationship-building work is not a checklist or a conventional assessment process with time-limited outcomes is important. Part of the success of Reconciliation is to act on the commitment with an open heart and mind and to embrace the challenges and value of working together.

Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, O.C. reminds us that "*Reconciliation is about change. It's about taking action to create a better future for all of us*.[3]" This plan is a step toward that change, recognizing that reconciliation is a continuous journey rather than a single outcome. The principles of Reconciliation, as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, provide a roadmap for moving forward.

[3] Source: Reconciliation Canada

An important aspect of this process is recognizing that Reconciliation is both a learning and a healing journey. It requires work within organizations and across society, governments, and individuals. The responsibility for Reconciliation does not rest on Indigenous Peoples but rather with all layers of Canadian society.

The journey of Reconciliation is one in which we commit to work within a framework that is inclusive, respectful, and humble. Generations of policies and processes have contributed to division, racism, and the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples. Now, we strive to find ways to come together, ensuring that land use planning and governance reflect Indigenous rights, knowledge, and priorities.

This Action Plan represents a living commitment that will evolve through the guidance, leadership, and relationships with Indigenous Governing Bodies, rather than a fixed destination.

Appendices

1. "Truth Precedes Reconciliation" Excerpt from 2021 Islands Trust Object: Past, Present, and Future Policy Statement Amendment Project Discussion Paper"
2. Islands Trust Reconciliation Framework
3. Terminology

Appendix 1: Truth Precedes Reconciliation

(Excerpt from 2021 Islands Trust Object: Past, Present, and Future Policy Statement Amendment Project Discussion Paper"

> *We all have to recognize that we are part of a heritage and ongoing reality of colonialism. Whether we have benefited from it or whether we have been victimized by it, we have to understand how we have been impacted by this dominant system. Oftentimes, we have been influenced to such an extent that we often don't even know that we're discriminating or being discriminated against. We must question what we've been taught and explore the possibilities of how things should be in the future.*[4]
>
> - Senator Murray Sinclair, Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)

No Acknowledgment of Place

When contemplating Policy Statement amendments through the lens of Reconciliation, it is important to acknowledge that First Nations have been excluded from legislative debates, policy and planning dialogues, and cooperative partnerships throughout most of the history of the Islands Trust. The area in which the Islands Trust has existed as a jurisdictional body since 1974 is located within the treaty and territorial areas of the BOḰEĆEN, Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Xwémalhkwu, K'ómoks, Klahoose, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Lək̓ʷəŋən (SXIMEŁEŁ, Songhees, T'Sou-ke), Lyackson, MÁLEXEŁ, Penelakut, Qualicum, Scia'new, səl̓ilwətaʔɬ, SEMYOME, shíshálh, Snaw-naw-as, Snuneymuxw, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, SȾÁUTW̱, Stz'uminus, Tla'amin, scəẃaθən məsteyəxʷ, We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum, W̱JOŁEŁP, W̱SIḴEM, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (the First Nations). Yet, there is no evidence in Hansard Reports, policy papers, or academic reviews that First Nations were ever part of the dialogue on the formation or boundaries of the Islands Trust Area.

Missing from the Trust Object

The Object of the Trust has never specifically named Indigenous Peoples or First Nations as agencies to cooperate or coordinate with, despite the fact that the Trust makes land use decisions within First Nations' treaty and territorial lands and waters:

> It is the object of the trust to preserve and protect, in co-operation with municipalities and the Government of the Province, the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of the Province generally. (*Islands Trust Act*, 1974)[5]

---

[4] Globe and Mail: *For Senator Murray Sinclair, leadership is defined by humility*, Jan 24, 2021

[5] Note that this legislative reference is from 2021 discussion paper. The Islands Trust Act was subsequently updated in late 2021 to Include a specific reference to First Nations in the Trust's Object statement to recognize its ongoing relationship and reconciliation efforts with First Nations.

> The object of the Trust is to preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia. (*Islands Trust Act,* 2018)

Objectives of the Islands Trust Council would be to request First Nations be added to the object of the Trust after the words "for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area, Indigenous Peoples, and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with First Nations governments, municipalities…".

Missing from History

The history of the Islands Trust Area and the colonization of the Gulf Islands is one of violence and erasure. It is important to understand that the history of the Islands Trust Area did not begin at the time of colonization in the 1880s; neither did it begin at the formation of the Islands Trust in 1974. The historical legislative policies and conceptualization of the Gulf Islands never acknowledged or recognized that the area had been home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. The beauty and "unique amenities" of the Gulf Islands are the very reasons why the area was home to Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years, and are reflected in the telling of First Nations' creation stories, relationship to the lands and waters, and stewardship of those lands and waters for future generations.

It should be underscored that the Islands Trust Area was, and still is, the location of permanent village sites with homes, longhouses, cultivated gathering areas for harvesting, clam gardens, and cultural sites. This occupation, over thousands of years, laid the foundations for the unique environment and amenities of the islands as we know them today. The Salish Sea Basin had one of the highest pre-contact population densities in North America, and has the earliest physical evidence of human seafaring and island occupation in the Americas. At this time, there are approximately 28,000 Coast Salish peoples living in and around the Islands Trust Area and 56,000 in the Coast Salish transboundary region. The climate and resources located in the Islands Trust Area were ideal for large village sites, evidenced by extensive scientific reviews of middens and archaeological sites in the area and oral history told by Cultural Knowledge Holders and Elders.

In a recent First Nations engagement meeting with Islands Trust staff, an Elder mentioned how longhouses on islands were burned to the ground and how the posts in the ground were cut to erase all evidence that the longhouse had even existed. The concept that these lands and waters had not been occupied and were free for the taking arose as residential schools were being built and the reserve system was enacted to segregate First Nations peoples away from their homelands so that they could be settled by non-Indigenous populations. From 1974 to the present day, there has been very little historical reference or acknowledgement of the longstanding presence of First Nations in the lands and waters of the Islands Trust Area.

Terra Nullius

For the settler communities who were colonizing the Islands Trust Area, the mentality of the day was one of "taming" the lands, and claiming lands through philosophical frameworks of Doctrine of Discovery[6] and terra nullius[7]. Beginning in 1875, the area was subject to *The Gradual Civilization Act*. The *Act* supported the concepts of private land ownership through the forced removal of First Peoples from the islands to reserves, away from locations deemed desirable for European settlement. As well, the *Act* ensured Indigenous Peoples did not have voting rights or citizenship rights to their own lands and waters. Further oppressive legislation restricted Indigenous Peoples to the reserve, did not allow them to gather in groups larger than three people, and denied them the ability to buy or hold land or hire legal representation. *The Gradual Civilization Act* was just one of the many oppressive legislative tools that facilitated the genocide of Indigenous Peoples, their homelands, their language, culture, and governance and family structures in the formation of Canada and the Islands Trust Area.

Residential Schools

The Islands Trust Area was the location of the Kuper Island Indian Residential School from 1889 to 1975, a place where cultural genocide occurred with the forced removal of children as young as five years old from the surrounding communities of Beecher Bay, Burrard, Chehalis, Chemainus / Chemainus Bay, Chilliwack, Clemclem / Clemclemluts, Cole Bay, Comeaken / Comiaken, Comox, Cowichan, Equimalt, Galiano, Khenipsen / Ghenipsen, Halelt / Halalt, Katzie, Koksilah, Kuleets, Kwaw Kwaw A Plit, Ladysmith, Langley, Lyackson, Malahat, Musqueam, Nanoose, Patricia Bay, Pauquachin, Penelakut, Qualicum, Quamichan, Saanich, Siccamen, Skawahlook / Skawollock, Skwah, Somenos, Songhees, Sooke, Squamish, Tsartlip, and Tsawout[8].

> *The school earned the name "Alcatraz" for its remote location on the small island. Right from its founding by the Catholic Church, the scale of suffering at Kuper Island was beyond the pale . . . Even school officials described Kuper Island as "ruinous" and "insanitary (sic)," with the school's notoriously poor conditions exacerbating outbreaks of typhus, smallpox and tuberculosis.*
>
> - National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

10,000 Years of Knowing

At the time of the formation of the Islands Trust in 1974, the government of the day recognized the importance of the unique "amenities" of the lands and waters. There was understanding that the environment of the area was fragile and could be greatly impacted by development and resource extraction or overuse. However, it was not acknowledged or understood that this unique environment was the result of thousands of years of active cultivation and stewardship by Indigenous Peoples. Hence, the government failed to consider Indigenous Knowledge of the lands

[6] UNDRIP para. 4: all doctrines, policies and practices based on advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences

[7] Oxford Reference: land that is unoccupied or uninhabited for legal purposes. The application of English law to overseas possessions distinguished between settled colonies

[8] National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

and waters of the Salish Sea, the "10,000 years of knowing" (a term stated by Chief Leah George-Wilson of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation), in the formation of policies and legislation that directly impacted First Peoples' homelands in the Islands Trust Area.

Throughout its forty-seven years of preserving and protecting the Islands Trust Area, the Islands Trust has consistently failed to recognize or acknowledge resource gathering areas, spiritual places, medicinal plant areas, and culturally significant species. The Islands Trust has managed the Islands Trust Area with a disconnected, single-species view of the ecological landscape versus a relational, interconnected acknowledgement of what truly makes the Islands Trust Area unique. Indigenous ways of knowing are not only important to reconciliation efforts, but also to the effective stewardship of these lands and waters.

Double Standards

Despite the fact that, in the formation of the Islands Trust, it was recognized that rapid population growth and development could greatly impact the communities that had established themselves on the islands and that quality of life should be sustainable and minimize negative effects[9]; it was never considered that the areas in question had been subject to the forced removal of Indigenous children to the horrors of residential school and the forced removal of their parents to reserves far from the growing populations of settlers. Efforts to protect the well-being of constituents in Trust Area communities were not equally exerted to protect the well-being of the First Peoples who were no longer residents of the islands due to their forced removal.

Failure to Protect Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage sites and features, and ancestral loved ones, remain throughout these islands from which First Nations have been forcibly removed. This cultural heritage, and the ancestral loved ones, have been desecrated, destroyed, and impacted as settler communities built on top of First Nation village sites, and extracted resources from culturally significant areas. With the enactment of the *Islands Trust Act* in 1974, the Islands Trust became the planning body that determined the impacts to cultural heritage sites and ancestral loved ones via its land and water use decisions. From its earliest version the *Islands Trust Act* acknowledged the importance of preserving and protecting cultural heritage. In 1974, it stated under s. 3(2)(d) that the Islands Trust was to "locate and identify archaeological and historical sites within the trust area" and under s. 3(2)(a) "make recommendations . . . for the preservation and protection of the trust area and its unique amenities and environment". The Gabriola Island Community plan of 1978 acknowledged the "fragile nature of the environment" and the "special natural and archaeological areas" of the island.

It is therefore surprising to find no evidence to suggest that Islands Trust Council, or local trust committees, ever undertook to locate and identify the archaeological areas, or to preserve and protect the ancestral loved ones' resting places and cultural heritage such as fish weirs, clam gardens, artifacts, burial cairns, petroglyphs, or middens that exist extensively on all islands within

[9] BC Round Table on Environmental and Economy, and the Commission on Resources and Environment 1990-1994

the Islands Trust Area. However, in 1984, the Islands Trust did document and identify the settler heritage buildings in the Islands Trust Area in an extensive publication.[10]

In 1992, the Islands Trust encapsulated the views of the public in a *Summary Report on the Islands Trust Public Forums: These Islands of Ours . . . Framing Our Common Future*. At the public forums, people listed "history and archaeological heritage" and "archaeological record" as key attributes they valued about the Trust Area. In 1994, the Islands Trust received more opportunities to cooperate and enter into new relationships with First Nations with treaty and territorial rights and title in the Islands Trust Area. Amendments were made to the *Islands Trust Act* that allowed the Islands Trust to enter into agreements with First Nations governments. In the 1994 legislative debates[11], legislators sought to clarify section 20(1)(b): the opportunity for the Islands Trust to enter into agreements with First Nations. Debate included the ability for the Islands Trust to enter into "a separate or bilateral set of negotiations" with First Nations to build "a very good working relationship" related to "conflicts over aspects that are considered to be heritage" and statements that "this is not just a question of the preservation of site-specific artifacts" but to provide the Trust with "a significant amount of empowerment". Debate further centred around the importance of First Nations heritage for the future, and how the preservation of sites in Haida Gwaii was an example of successful agreements. Unfortunately, despite this growing public consciousness and increased authority to preserve and protect First Nations' cultural heritage and establish stronger, more collaborative relationships with First Nations in the Trust Area, the Trust continued its pattern of inaction.

In 1994, the Islands Trust was also granted new legislative authority through amendments to Bill *21 Heritage Conservation Statutes Amendment Act*, 1994, changes to the *Islands Trust Act*, and changes to the *Municipal Act*. Amendments to the *Islands Trust Act* included new powers to engage in "activities to gain knowledge about the history and heritage of the trust area and to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the history and heritage" and to "conserve heritage property". Heritage property under the *Municipal Act* was defined as "property that in the opinion of a body or person authorized to exercise a power under this Act in relation to the property has sufficient heritage value or heritage character to justify its conservation, or is a protected heritage property". Protected heritage property is defined as "protected under section 6(2) of the *Heritage Conservation Act*".

The *Heritage Conservation Act* states that heritage property is protected and it is illegal to "damage, excavate, dig in or alter, or remove any heritage object from, a site that contains artifacts, features, materials or other physical evidence of human habitation or use before 1846". The Islands Trust Area is within a historically rich and culturally abundant place of significant heritage value and properties. As noted above, the role and responsibility of Islands Trust was to recognize and protect the cultural heritage and historical significance of the area, which included the heritage of Indigenous Peoples. Land use decisions, bylaws, and official community plans should have been reflective of these new legislative powers to ensure the preservation and protection of significant sites such as Poets Cove, Grace Islet, and Harbour House to name just a

[10] Islands Heritage Buildings: A Selection of Heritage Buildings in the Islands Trust Area 1984
[11] Legislative Session: 3rd Session, 35th Parliament, Volume 17, No. 2 June 29, 1994

few. The devastating impacts of the removal of ancestral loved ones from their resting places to institutions such as the Royal BC Museum, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, and the Museum of Civilization contributed to cultural genocide within the Islands Trust Area.

Continued Legacy of Inaction

The history of the Islands Trust has unfortunately been one of complacent disregard for the history of Indigenous Peoples in the Trust Area and a lack of will to protect the collective heritage of the area for Indigenous Peoples, British Columbians, and Canada as a whole. Throughout the entire Trust Area, the destruction of archaeological sites, gravesites, cultural areas, and villages continues to this day. The history of cumulative impacts and destruction to the culture and historical understanding of the area has been devastating to First Nations communities and their well-being, and has contributed to a general lack of trust in the role of Islands Trust. Despite the clear mandate to preserve and protect against development pressures in this fragile area, the Islands Trust has facilitated development on village sites that had existed for thousands of years, leading to the destruction of those areas and the unearthing of ancestral loved ones. This is especially tragic given that Indigenous Peoples were forcibly removed from the area and stripped of their ability to preserve and protect their own heritage through land use decision-making.

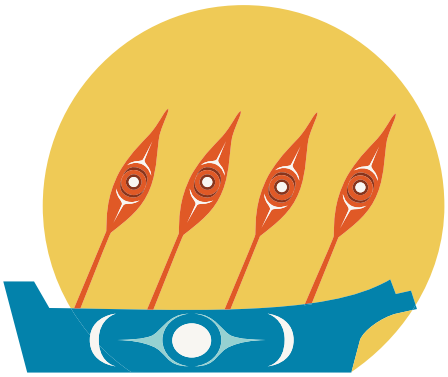
The formation of the Islands Trust in 1974 made it uniquely positioned to ensure the preservation and conservation of historical sites and archaeological areas for future generations of Indigenous Peoples and all British Columbians. As noted in legislative debates from 1974 to 1994, this had always been part of the rationale for the formation of the Islands Trust. Nonetheless, the Islands Trust has generally seemed to lack the will to compel other ministries and government agencies to prioritize the heritage of Indigenous Peoples, despite having the authority to do so, and despite being granted additional powers to work cooperatively with First Nations through amendments to the *Heritage Conservation Act* in 1994.

The Islands Trust did enter into protocol agreements with some First Nations after 1994; however, those agreements did not lead to additional protections or land use decision policies to protect the heritage of Nations or create collaborative relationships at a government-to-government level. The looting of ancestral remains and cultural artifacts has long been a known practice in the area, outlined in media articles in local newspapers, in meetings held with island communities, and in community conversations going back before the formation of the Islands Trust. Unfortunately, Islands Trust enforcement policies were not coordinated with other ministries or First Nations to address the looting of cultural artifacts or sites, and advocacy efforts have not been successful at curbing these unlawful activities that lead to the erasure of cultural heritage and desecration.

We end this section on the history and legacy of the Islands Trust Area with a quote from Chief Roland Wilson, West Moberly First Nation:

> *You can show Canada and the world that the only way to escape our colonial history of neglect and betrayal is to act boldly and honourably in the decisions that lie before us today.*

Appendix 2: Islands Trust Indigenous Relations Framework



This design depicts an ocean-going Coast Salish canoe, symbolizing a journey through time and tradition. It reflects the enduring connection Indigenous peoples have with the coastal waters surrounding Vancouver Island and the mainland, traveling these routes for generations while carrying forward teachings, knowledge, and cultural values. The canoe represents both movement and continuity, emphasizing the ongoing growth, learning, and guidance passed on to younger generations.
Margaret August

The Islands Trust Indigenous Relations Framework reflects that relationship-building is not a checklist—it is a journey. All elements must work together to support relationship-building at the core. The steps are not linear; rather, each can occur at any time, depending on the context and stage of engagement.

Confronting Anti-Indigenous Racism

Relationship-building cannot occur without addressing anti-Indigenous racism at the individual, institutional, and systemic levels. Anti-Indigenous racism is not incidental; it is embedded in colonial laws, policies, professional practices, and social norms that continue to shape decision-making today.

Learning about anti-Indigenous racism requires ongoing self-reflection, unlearning biases, examining power, and understanding how harm is reproduced even through well-intentioned processes. This learning is a continuous responsibility for trustees, staff, and leadership and must inform all engagement, planning, and decision-making with Indigenous Governing Bodies.

Process to **Build Relationships** with Indigenous people:

It is imperative to recognize **Truth** by acknowledging the full history of colonial impacts and accepting the hard truths of past and ongoing injustices, and includes acknowledging how Indigenous-specific racism has shaped policies, planning, practices, enforcement, and public process, and how these harms continue today Truth serves as the foundation for meaningful change.

Deep Learning means going beyond surface-level acknowledgment to deep, inquisitive learning. It involves recognizing Indigenous governance, laws, and land stewardship while learning from both historical and contemporary Indigenous perspectives. It means learning about how colonial narratives and racial hierarchies have displaced Indigenous knowledge systems while privileging western governance and science.

Honoring **Indigenous Leadership** may require confronting internal biases and challenging institutional resistance that can undermine recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction and partnerships. Islands Trust commits to an ongoing effort to co-develop planning and land use management processes with Indigenous Governing Bodies within the Islands Trust Area. Islands Trust Council will be informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for its approach to reconciliation.

Building **Trust** cannot be accomplished without addressing racism when it occurs, responding to harm, and changing behaviours, process, and power dynamics that perpetuate exclusion. Trust building requires consistency and respectful actions. Trust grows when Indigenous voices are heard, valued, and reflected in decision-making. Islands Trust must facilitate this process with long-term commitment and accountability.

Taking **Action** includes embedding anti-Indigenous-specific racism training, accountability mechanisms, and cultural safety expectations into policies, staffing, evaluations, and governance process. It means backing up words with concrete steps. Policy changes, equitable partnerships, and decolonizing systems are necessary to move forward. Continuous self-reflection and adaptation are essential to ensuring lasting progress.

Appendix 3: Terminology

Islands Trust acknowledges that its understanding and knowledge base is limited. This document is intended to be responsive and subject to change as it continues to be informed by Indigenous perspectives, interests, and guidance from Indigenous Governing Bodies into the future. The terms below are not exhaustive and do not fully encompass the rich history, culture, language, protocols, or the depth of Indigenous law, governance, naming, place-based knowledge, or traditional ways of knowing.

- "Indigenous Governing Body" means an entity that is authorized to act on behalf of Indigenous Peoples that hold rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.
- "Indigenous Peoples" has the same meaning as Aboriginal peoples in section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.
- "Rights" mean asserted or established rights as referred to under Section 35 of the Constitution and Nation-specific Treaties.
- "Territory" refers to territories that Nations have occupied and continue to occupy where they exercise their Indigenous rights.
- "Distinction-Based Approach" refers to working with First Nations in a manner that acknowledges the specific and inherent rights of each nation, while respecting and acknowledging their specific cultures, histories, laws, governments, interests, priorities, and concerns.