



the Heron



A newsletter from Islands Trust Conservancy | Protecting islands in the Salish Sea | islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy

SUMMER 2025

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Yarrow's Story: Koontz NAPTEP Covenant

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LEFT TO RIGHT: DAVE BODALY, SNUNEYMUXW ELDER AND KNOWLEDGE KEEPER, YARROW AIKO KOONTZ, LANDHOLDER, HUGH SKINNER, GALT, WENDY TYRRELL, ITC, ANNE LANDRY, GALT, KATHRYN MARTELL, ITC.



For links and additional media, visit the Heron Newsletter online:
www.islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/heron-newsletter/



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SALT SPRING ISLAND

BULL KELP. PHOTO: LAUREN MAN.

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Celebrating New Conservation Covenants

In October 2024, Islands Trust Conservancy registered two new Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) conservation covenants: Skye Larmour NAPTEP Covenant on Salt Spring Island, and Koontz NAPTEP Covenant on Gabriola Island. Islands Trust Conservancy manages NAPTEP on behalf of Islands Trust Council, holding the conservation covenant while Council grants the property tax exemption. NAPTEP provides island landholders with an annual 65% property tax reduction on the portion of their land protected by a conservation covenant. This incentive is unique to the Islands Trust Area.

Skye Larmour NAPTEP Covenant, Salt Spring Island

In October 2024, Skye Larmour protected 2.45 ha of land on Salt Spring Island with a NAPTEP conservation covenant. This covenant expands habitat protection provided by the adjacent Larmour Lands Nature Reserve, generously transferred to Islands Trust Conservancy in 2023, and is part of honouring the legacy of Skye's father, Mike Larmour, a dedicated Salt Spring Island conservationist. The new conservation covenant protects mature forests, wetlands, and habitat for multiple at-risk species while allowing the working farm to continue running on the remainder of the property. This covenant is co-held with Salt Spring Island Conservancy and was completed in collaboration with the Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society.



SKYE LARMOUR NAPTEP COVENANT. SALT SPRING ISLAND.

Koontz NAPTEP Covenant, Gabriola Island

In October 2024, Islands Trust Conservancy worked with the Gabriola Land & Trails Trust and dedicated Gabriola Island conservationist Yarrow Koontz to protect most of her property with a NAPTEP covenant. Now protected forever, this 2.68 ha covenant has forested wetlands, a pond, arbutus forests, rocky balds, and small cliffs, all of which are prime habitat for otters, frogs, owls, salmon, lizards, and more. The Koontz covenant protects not only a diversity of habitats but also the ecological transition zones amongst them, a crucial facet of connecting habitat and building resiliency to climate change.



KOONTZ NAPTEP COVENANT. GABRIOLA ISLAND.

You too can leave a lasting impact for generations to come on the islands you love.

Make a conservation impact through a gift in your Will, a donation of land, or a financial contribution. Get in touch with our Strategic Fund Development Specialist, Mike Richards, to learn more. Email donate@islandstrust.bc.ca or call 250-247-2205. Learn more about how to protect nature with ITC: islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/protect-nature/.



PHOTO: LISA WILCOX

Islands Trust and Islands Trust Conservancy respectfully acknowledge that the lands and waters that encompass the Islands Trust Area have been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial and that their deep connection to the islands continues to this day. We are committed to reconciliation, to upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples, 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 in the treaty and territorial lands and waters of the BOKÉĆEN, Cowichan Tribes, K'ómoks, Lyackson, MÁLEXEL, Qualicum, scəwáθən, səlilw'ətəl, SEMYOME, shishálh, Skw̓xwú7mesh, Snaw-naw-as, Snuneymuxw, Songhees, Spune'luxutth', STÁUTW, Stz'uminus, laʔəmen, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Wei Wai Kum, We Wai Kai, W JOLELP, WSIKEM, Xeláltxw, Xwémalhkwa, Xwsepsum, and xʷməθkʷəy.



YARROW AIKO KOONTZ. KOONTZ NAPTEP COVENANT LANDHOLDER.

An Act of Conservation & Ancestral Obligation

Placing the covenant was important to Yarrow to ensure that if she ends up having to sell the property in the future, the land and species are protected from development forever. Yarrow credits the placing of the covenant to those who supported her throughout the process, including the Gabriola Land & Trails Trust, and staff and Board members at Islands Trust Conservancy.

Next spring at the Gabriola Museum, exhibits will be on display, designed and created by Yarrow through her work with the Gabriola Historical and Museum Society and the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society that honour the history and stories of Japanese Canadians who lived on Gabriola Island until 1942 when they were forcibly removed from the Coast. This work was inspired by a recent trip that Yarrow took with her mother to Japan to visit her great grandparents' graves.

As she has been working on this project to shine a light on this important history, Yarrow learned that a small community of Japanese people were living in her neighbourhood until 1925 when the sawmill burned down. "I didn't know when I bought the land that a Japanese-owned sawmill used to operate down the road. This property in particular is where they were working and logging."

In the end, the choice to covenant the property, and help restore the forest and species that reside there, was not only an act of conservation, it was, as Yarrow shares, an act of "ancestral obligation." Continue reading more from Yarrow's story in the Islands Trust Conservancy Journal: islandstrust.bc.ca/conservancy/the-journal/.

Stay tuned for a Heron newsletter about the Skye Larmour NAPTEP Covenant and Mike Larmour's conservation legacy!

Yarrow Aiko Koontz, Koontz NAPTEP Covenant landholder

Yarrow Aiko Koontz, landholder of the Koontz NAPTEP Covenant on Gabriola Island, has been a dedicated conservationist all her life. She was born and raised in Vancouver by her Japanese mother, her father, and her Japanese grandparents who instilled in her the Japanese concept of Mottainai. Mottainai embodies the "waste not, want not" sentiment, living with a small impact on the planet. She spent her childhood and formative years growing up in a culture of people who were critical thinkers and artists, turning her concern for the environment into action by participating in logging protests on Vancouver Island and mainland BC. When she first visited the land on Gabriola, Yarrow recalls that she "had this feeling that I could take care of this place, and it needed a lot of care. There was something about the property I felt really connected to."



KOONTZ NAPTEP COVENANT CELEBRATION. JUNE 2025. PHOTO: DREW STANILAND.



KOONTZ NAPTEP COVENANT CELEBRATION. VISITING THE POND. JUNE 2025.



SAMPLING IN KELP BEDS ON THE BC COAST.
PHOTO: MARKUS THOMPSON.

The BC Kelp Resilience Project

The kelp forests of the Salish Sea’s marine shores form the basis of one of the world’s most productive and structurally complex coastal ecosystems. Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) forests support a variety of marine creatures, buffer shorelines against coastal erosion, and contribute to carbon and nutrient cycling. In 2024, Kathryn Martell, the Islands Trust Conservancy Ecosystem Protection Specialist, co-authored two publications on the resiliency of kelp beds in the Salish Sea as part of ITC’s involvement with the British Columbia Kelp Resiliency ([BCKelpR](#)) project.

Bull kelp is an annual species, and although kelp forest locations are relatively constant, the size and density can be highly variable over both time and space, due to many factors including temperature, light, and grazing by sea urchins. The goal of the BCKelpR project is to determine how Salish Sea kelp forests have changed in the last two centuries, and to identify the driving factors of those changes in order to better understand potential impacts of climate change.

Ultimately, the research partnership hopes to apply these results to aid in local and regional management strategies to protect and restore these vital biodiversity hotspots. Dive in to this interesting project on the University of Victoria’s Spectral Lab’s website: uvicspectral.com/kelp. Watch this video youtu.be/33V5A_sErZA?si=3e7clhotquECzK8u for an overview of the project.

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