

Sustaining the Islands – Community Stewardship Awards Program



Islands Trust

2015 Nominee Profile

Michael Dunn, Mayne Island

Category:	Individual
Project:	Fostering ecological and community sustainability for 20 years
Nominator(s):	Executive Committee, Mayne Island Conservancy Society

Project Description:

Michael Dunn has launched and coordinated many initiatives in the past two decades that enhance both the environment and economic sustainability of Mayne Island.

As the founder and coordinator of the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning since 2000, Michael has been educating children and teens, both on and off-island, about ecological values and increasing the island's 'resiliency' through summer and day camps, leadership training and programs.

Other significant volunteer roles include:

- Organizer of Oceans Day events since mid 90's
- Weigh-in master of annual Beach Cleanup since 2008 (90 volunteers on 16 beaches)
- Initiator of on-going Henderson Hill Restoration Project since 2008
- Regional Coordinator of Active Pass Bird Area and organizer of annual bird counts
- Coordinator of Food and Agriculture Strategy for Economic Development Commission - 2014

Since 2013, Michael Dunn has volunteered for at least 24 hours per week as the Executive Director of the Mayne Island Conservancy Society, promoting the Society's mandate to foster harmony between nature and community and raising funds to support this work.

Michael started a Walkabout program in 2010 in which volunteers walk with landowners (50 properties so far) to identify native and invasive plant species and find conservation solutions. Michael has dedicated a portion of his own property for the Native Plants Nursery of the Conservancy and is growing 23 species of plants resistant to fallow deer and drought.

Michael's newest project is Festival Active Pass which promotes economic activity by celebrating the natural beauty and wildlife of the Salish Sea region, its unique communities and the art it inspires.

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2015 Nominee Profile

Susan Yates, Gabriola Island

- Category:** Individual
- Project:** Contributing to literary arts and environmental stewardship for 30 years
- Nominator(s):** Fay Weller and Judith Roux

Project Description:

Susan has been working in the community and for the community for over 30 years. She enriches Gabriola Island through her involvement in Friends of the Library team, Poetry Gabriola, Gabriola Commons, Gabriola Elementary School, GERTIE (local bus), Sustainable Gabriola, the Watershed Sentinel newsletter, Gabriola Island Recycling Organization, seniors' bingo, and many other organizations. In addition, Susan is a source of wildlife, plant, and ecosystem knowledge on Gabriola. She shares her knowledge through elementary school programming as well as other eco-system mapping projects on Gabriola.

More than 25 years ago, Susan was one of the organizers behind the establishment of the Recycling Depot on Gabriola Island, and she was instrumental in getting the first official bicycle path built on a Gabriola road. Today, she volunteers several days a week in the elementary school, and puts in several hours a week at the Recycling Depot, in addition to attending board meetings and organizing and supporting community activities such as assisting local authors, encouraging active social connections for seniors, and arranging literary events that attract visitors to the island.

Susan fills a wide range of essential roles: Master of Ceremonies, note-taker, facilitator, board member, teacher, driver, organizer, or general volunteer. Susan's many volunteer efforts and her commitment to bringing people and organizations together in creative ways have supported and shaped many valuable features of Gabriola Island life. By leading through example, Susan inspires a culture of community service, volunteerism and engagement.

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2015 Nominee Profile

Leigh Ann Milman, Gabriola Island

- Category:** Individual
- Project:** Leading land protection for 20 years
- Nominator(s):** Joan Cellik, Sheila Malcolmson and John Peirce

Project Description:

Leigh Ann Milman has been a driving force behind many land protection initiatives on Gabriola Island. Leigh Ann has been involved with conservation work on Gabriola since 1993 when she joined the board of the Heartlands Conservancy, now the Gabriola Land Conservancy. As President of the Conservancy for many years, Leigh Ann's efforts were instrumental in helping increase the amount of protected land on Gabriola Island from 2% in 2005 to almost 10% in 2014. She was a key player in protecting the Regional District of Nanaimo's 707 Acre Community Park and Coats Marsh Regional Park, the Islands Trust Fund's Elder Cedar (S'ul-hween X'pey) Nature Reserve and Burren's Acres Nature Reserve.

Leigh Ann's enthusiasm for protecting land and the natural environment is contagious, and has influenced and encouraged many people. Her talent for bringing people together using an inclusive, cooperative, can-do approach has helped the Gabriola Island community to work together to create lasting ecological legacies.

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2015 Nominee Profile

Saturna Island Marine Research and Education Society, Saturna Island

Category:	Group
Project:	Marine research and education
Nominator(s):	Priscilla Zimmerman

Project Description:

The Saturna Island Marine Research and Education Society (SIMRES) is a volunteer organization that brings together marine researchers, educators and individuals to increase public awareness about the marine life of our Pacific region and to enhance understanding of the relationship between human activity and the ecosystem in the Salish Sea.

The group was established in 2012 following a community-based economic development conference on the island. While the group received start-up funding from the Saturna Island Community Club, Saturna Island Lion's Club and the Capital Regional District, it is supported mostly by community funding and through educational events.

One of the projects organized by SIMRES is the Saturna Environment Awareness or SeaTalks, a series of interactive presentations and workshops by researchers, scientists, local experts, divers, marine conservationists, interpreters, film makers and photographers on a range of marine life topics.

Since 2012, SIMRES has delivered over 15 SeaTalks, two major symposia and a number of workshops with organizations such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Vancouver Aquarium, University of Victoria, Ocean Networks Canada, Washington's Center for Whale Research and University of British Columbia.

The group has installed two hydrophones at East Point to allow researchers to monitor underwater sounds and study marine mammal communication and know when whales are in the area. In collaboration with an Internet provider, Orcas Online, SIMRES is able to provide online streaming of the hydrophone data to use for both research and as a communication and public outreach tool.

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2015 Nominee Profile

Island Futures Society, Gabriola Island

Category:	Group
Project:	Gabriola Environmentally Responsible Trans-Isle Express (GERTIE)
Nominator(s):	Linnet Kartar

Project Description:

The Gabriola Environmentally Responsible Trans-Isle Express (GERTIE) is a volunteer-run bus service dedicated to providing transportation options for Gabriola Island's residents and visitors, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and collecting data regarding the feasibility of public transit on the island.

After many years of studies, surveys and meetings, the Island Futures Society launched GERTIE in June 2013 by buying a bus with funding from the Regional District of Nanaimo and community donations. Since then, GERTIE has provided more than 22,348 rides, resulting in a reduction of at least 16 tonnes of greenhouse gases in the first year. In addition to regularly scheduled routes, GERTIE provides transportation to community events and is available for private events.

The Island Futures Society has operated the bus on 50% waste vegetable oil, a non-hierarchical group of volunteers and one part-time paid coordinator. Other Gabriola Islanders have contributed to GERTIE's success by buying bus tickets, volunteering to drive, collecting waste vegetable oil, building bus shelters, attending meetings and generally helping out as required.

GERTIE is an effective way of reducing greenhouse gases as it encourages car owners to leave their vehicle at home and enables car free tourism. Through this project, Gabriola Island residents have learned that it is possible to reduce carbon emissions while building a sense of community and having some fun.

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2015 Nominee Profile

Protect Grace Islet Group, Salt Spring Island

Category:	Group
Project:	Advocating for the protection of cultural heritage
Nominator(s):	Salt Spring Island Conservancy

Project Description:

The Protect Grace Islet Group formed in 2014 to support neighbouring First Nations in their efforts to protect Grace Islet's ancient burial site, to protect the islet's ecological features, and to restore the islet to its pre-development state.

Grace Islet's landowner, having acquired a permit from the Province to build on the registered archaeological site, was constructing a house on top of burial cairns. A common belief that united the Protect Grace Islet Group's diverse members was that the provincial development permit contravened the intent of the BC *Heritage Conservation Act*. The Penelakut, Cowichan, Halalt, Tsawout and Tseycum First Nations had all previously requested that the Province of BC prevent the desecration of this burial site.

The Protect Grace Islet Group's members supported local First Nations efforts in many ways: organizing educational events, raising funds for legal costs, hosting First Nations elders, paddling around the islet in protest, making food, writing letters to decision-makers in all levels of government, making films, writing stories and songs, developing mailing lists, updating social media, and holding vigils.

In January 2015, the Province of BC announced it would purchase Grace Islet with the intent of transferring it to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for complete restoration and protection and that it would undertake a review of the province's heritage and archeological laws and policies.

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2015 Nominee Profile

Mayne Island Agricultural Society, Mayne Island

Category: Group

Project: Promoting agriculture and the fall fair for fifty-three years

Nominator(s): Mayne Island Residents and Ratepayers Association

Project Description:

The Mayne Island Agricultural Society was founded in 1962. The society acts as a cornerstone for diverse community endeavours on Mayne Island and attracts a broad range of volunteers. The Society owns and operates the Agricultural Hall, Museum and Thrift Shop, and uses the proceeds to fund Mayne Island students, community groups and associations.

In 1925, Mayne Island hosted the first fall fair within the Southern Gulf Islands. Since taking over the fall fair from the Maple Leaf Club in 1962, the Society's annual fall fairs have allowed farmers to showcase the island's farm products, attracted visitors to the island, offered educational opportunities, and brought the Mayne Island community together. Now in its 90th year, the fall fair has inspired other island communities to develop their own fall fairs.

The Agricultural Hall is still used almost daily by the community for a variety of community activities, performances and meetings, while the Society's Saturday farmers markets continue to provide an important venue for farmers to sell their products.

The Society promotes agriculture and horticulture on the island through educational workshops, often held in partnership with the Mayne Island Garden Club and the Mayne Island Conservancy. Despite being a legacy of island pioneers and a caretaker of island traditions, the Society is also takes on forward-looking initiatives such as its work to establish the first public electric car charging station on Mayne Island.