

Thinking Like an Archipelago

Islands 2050 invites ideas about the future of the Trust Area

“Archipelago: (noun) 1. An extensive group of islands. 2. A sea or stretch of water having many islands.” –Mirriam Webster Dictionary

“Our lives are like islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest. The maple and the pine may whisper to each other with their leaves...But the trees also commingle their roots in the darkness underground, and the islands also hang together through the ocean's bottom.”

–William James

When people ask us where we live, I bet most of us say Denman Island. If we want to answer more regionally, we might say Vancouver Island, or coastal BC.

But there's another way to think about this: we live in the Salish Sea, as part of an archipelago.

We could think about this place as an interconnected geography of islands and ocean. There's plenty of evidence suggesting that the original inhabitants thought, and lived, that way. Over 30 First Nations have called these lands and waters home since time immemorial. Then, as now, they created connections through travel, relationships, trade, ceremony, and shared language and cultural practices.

An archipelago-based way of thinking is the basis of the Islands Trust, the special-purpose governing agency entrusted with bringing an environmental focus to land use regulation in the region.

The original idea of the Trust is that these islands have enough in common geographically, culturally, and historically to justify considering them a region—one that warrants special protection.

Most Denmanites encounter the Trust only in its local form, as the three-person Denman Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) that oversees zoning and deals with development applications. I get the feeling that most Denmanites value the localness of the LTC. They like that they have a good chance of knowing the trustees personally, and of seeing them at island gathering places. They like that meetings are held at local venues, and that Denman has its own policies and regulations.

But just as Denman is part of the Salish Sea archipelago, the Denman LTC is part of something bigger. Each of the 13 major islands in the Trust Area has its own LTC, and together they form a 26-member group called Trust Council. When you hear people refer to “the Islands Trust” they might mean the local committee, Trust Council, or both. Because the Trust is local *and* regional.

How does this play out? The LTC makes decisions about local land use policies, regulations, and development applications on the island.

Trust Council is where the islands “hang together” to borrow words from the William James quote above. Here's how that works:

- LTCs pool financial resources to operate offices and retain professional staff, including specialists in freshwater, advocacy, Indigenous relations and more
- Staff and trustees share information, resources, learning opportunities, and more
- The Islands Trust Conservancy, which works in parallel to Trust Council, has protected 1200 hectares across the Trust Area so far.

Trust Council, as a body or through committees, and supported by staff, does the following:

- Creates programs for the region, such as last term's housing forum, freshwater workshops, and housing needs assessments
- Carries out advocacy on issues ranging from BC Ferries to pipelines to Orcas, speaking as one voice for the Trust Area
- Oversees the Islands Trust Policy Statement, the foundational document that guides policy decisions about island landscapes and seascapes, and how we humans interact with them.

If you're interested in thinking like an archipelago, and influencing the future of the Islands Trust Area, the Trust is offering an opportunity:

Islands 2050 is a public engagement process designed to help everyone plan for the challenges and opportunities the Trust Area will face in the next 30 years, particularly as we encounter the realities of climate change. The initiative will help Trust Council update the Policy Statement, which has not been reviewed in 25 years.

Here are some ways to get involved in Islands 2050:

Learn about Islands 2050 and/or join the conversation at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/trust-council/projects/islands-2050/>.

Come to an **Open House and World Cafe on Tuesday, October 29, 6:30 – 8:30 at the Denman Community Hall**

- Read the current Policy Statement at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/trust-council/governance/policy-statement/>

As always, feel free to contact myself or Local Trustee David Critchley about this or any other Trust matter at lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca | 250-218-3216; dcritchley@islandstrust.bc.ca | 250-218-3214.