

Trustee Yates report from June Council

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On June 27 Trustee Tobi Elliott and I welcomed Gabriola our fellow Council members representing the 13 Trust Areas: from Denman and Hornby Islands in the north to Saturna Island in the far southeastern corner of the Salish Sea. This was Trust Council's first on-island meeting for almost 3 years – the last one was on Salt Spring, the very week that the pandemic shut-down began.

Trust Council last met on Gabriola in March of 2019, and there was palpable relief and pleasure from returning Trustees who remember The Haven, a beautiful space that is conducive to fulsome discussions and a productive sense of camaraderie. As CAO Russ Hotsenpillar noted, "Lots of good work has been done in this space."

Council proceedings began with Elder and knowledge keeper David Bodaly's warm smile, kind words, and drumming, welcoming Trustees to Snuneymuxw First Nations territory. Council Chair Peter Luckham, from Thetis Island, then acknowledged the Islands Trust commitment to true reconciliation, this being a long-term learning process and essential part of Council process for all Trustees whose work spans the territories of many Coast Salish Nations.

The first afternoon of Council's quarterly meeting usually includes a Trustee Roundtable, during which we hear about events and issues that are often common across the Trust Area, and sometimes unique to one island. I focussed on the recent spate of clear-cut logging on private property, which is legal but distressing to many residents and at cross-purposes to the climate emergency and the environmental crises we now face.

I also spoke briefly about 'the ferry hill', which all islands have, be they steep or gently sloping. Some are quite pleasant to traverse, with roadside paths that allow for safe walking and cycling, but ours presents a miserable experience if you are a pedestrian or cyclist. There is some faint hope of that changing with the 2nd recent submission for terminal redevelopment by BC Ferries. A small group of concerned Gabriolans will soon be working to advocate for a safe road/path to the ferry that we can be proud of.

Trustee Elliott commented that 'relationships move at the pace of trust'; an excellent maxim which I hope everyone around the Council table heard. She has proven particularly effective at encouraging collaboration around the Council table, for which I am grateful.

Gambier/Keats Trustees informed Council that their Official Community Plan process, begun in 2015, is on hold, waiting for the Squamish Nation's input. Plans for a massive aggregate mine were cancelled, cause for celebration by everyone who understands the international significance of the Howe Sound UNESCO Biosphere project. But on the unseen side of At'ka'tsem/Howe Sound, massive clear cuts with little or no replanting are alarming reminders of the pillaging that is still part of SuperNatural B.C. However, Trustee Kate Louise Stamford ended her update with a hopeful observation – in what used to be the most polluted waters of the west coast, and next to enormous log booms, rockfish and glass sponge reefs have re-appeared, and a family of orcas visits the area regularly.

Denman Trustees noted that collaboration at in-person Council meetings makes a world of difference in how problems are solved. Building community relationships by 'walking the talk' is important, and Trustee Sam Borthwick asserted, 'We have the best kids, and there are now around 50 who make up the school-age population (up from 20 in the recent past). Trustee Borthwick spoke proudly of the bright red community bus, called the ScuttleBus (it has a crab motif, and we all know the island propensity for gossip) which now serves Denman and, like our GERTIE bus, is especially useful during the summer busy times. In fact the number of bus riders on the ScuttleBus has doubled this summer so far, compared to last summer. Sam is also the Denman bus driver and human hub that makes the community bus wheels go round!

Ship-breaking in Baynes Sound near Union Bay continues, and is a dire threat to the already endangered herring and shellfish in Baynes Sound, both of which provide economic sustenance to nearby communities. Denman Trustees from the previous term also did everything they could, along with concerned

citizens' groups, to halt this illegal activity, to no avail so far.

Hornby Trustee Alex Allen bemoaned the ferry situation, which is worsening with the proliferation of unregulated Short Term Vacation Rentals (STVRs) and which has Hornby residents asking for a ferry direct to their island, bypassing the Denman Island 'speed bump.' The proposed tree-cutting and road building to make extra ferry lineup lanes to accommodate the increase in Hornby-destined vehicles is distressing to Denman residents and Hornby Islanders are not happy about that either. Trustee Allen commented that Temporary Use Permits are a curse – they just make STVRs 'go on forever'. On the brighter side (for some), Hornby residents firmly turned down the latest Rogers cell tower proposal.

South Pender Trustees are beginning their OCP revision, with good community participation. As Chair of their LTC, Tobi Elliott will be a strong proponent of maximum public input, including the First Nations whose territories include S,DA/YES. North Pender is looking at extensive bylaw reviews and focussing on housing.

Salt Spring Trustees are also focussing their work on housing with help from citizens groups. Like many of the communities in the Trust Area and around the province, affordable housing is critical to maintaining stable employment and diverse populations. Not to mention an outlook on the future that isn't depressingly cynical, or as I've mentioned to a few Trustees, a modern form of feudalism.

Bowen Island Trustees reported on the plans for a 200 acre regional park at Cape Roger Curtis; a remarkably beautiful high shore area at the SW corner of Bowen. It was previously logged and blasted and islanders now want to see it preserved. Bowen Island Municipal Council, of which 2 members are Trustees Sue Ellen Fast and Judith Gedye, will work with the Greater Vancouver Regional District to ensure appropriate development. The LTC has posed 25 conditions that must be met for the 100 camp sites of various types to be approved.

Of special note here: Sue Ellen Fast from Bowen Island and Peter Luckham (Thetis) both cycled to Trust Council on Gabriola! Former Gabriola Trustee Scott Colbourne was known for his inter-island cycling feats too.

Mayne Island Trustees Jeanine Dodds was pleased to report on a 3 year housing project to bring 10 affordable housing units to the island, with the help of Habitat for Humanity, which helps people get into home ownership and sometimes includes rental housing. Council Vice Chair and fellow Mayne Trustee David Maude vied with Denman's assertion about having 'the best kids' and talked about the dramatic demographic change on Mayne recently, from mostly seniors to "young families everywhere."

Galiano Island Trustee Lisa Gauvreau garnered everyone's attention by expressing her gratitude for gathering together around the Council table, on Gabriola Island in Snuneymuxw territory, and imagining this place before the colonial era began. Trustee Gauvreau was later elected to the Islands Trust Conservancy Board; Tobi Elliott and I are both on the Board and are honoured to work with her.

Lasqueti Island Trustees are looking at defining community benefits (sometimes called amenities if they are part of a rezoning process) with their newly appointed Advisory Planning Commission members. Their summertime mantra regarding Lasqueti's unpaved roads is "Slow down, don't pave". I hold that to be true for paved roads too; it's an island, for the love of life, please slow down.

Saturna Trustee Mairead Boland reported on the terrible logging mess that happened earlier this spring across from Russell Bay, whereby by MOTI had 50 trees felled instead of the intended dozen or so. I saw this mini-disaster in April and couldn't believe the huge cedars lying every which way up and down the steep slope, some of them lying in the ditch and almost onto the road. On a lighter note, Trustee Boland noted that the Islands Trust is coming up to 50 years of 'preserving and protecting' as its provincial mandate, a meaning that can seem elusive if you've watched the Trust as long as I have.

Trustees moved to extend the current **Strategic Plan** through 2024/25 until further projects are approved, which means these 6 items remain a priority: 1) Updating the Islands Trust Policy Statement – for which a

Senior Policy Advisor has just been hired; 2) First Nations Reconciliation – underpinning all of Trust Council's work and which will be fortified by the recent hiring of a new Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor to fill a long-vacant position (and which will be boosted by \$150,000 from the province for engagement work); 3) Housing – the current Strategic Plan has several projects related to housing affordability; 4) Governance Review – now supported by a strong Council Committee; 5) Freshwater work: water budgets are still required for the northern islands (including Gabriola), the results of which will inform land use decisions. This information is essential to the OCP review that Gabriola will be undertaking; and 6) Provincial funding request – this is long overdue, for an agency that has a provincial mandate and less than 2% of its budget coming directly (not as project funds) from the province.

Robyn Kefi is the new Senior Intergovernmental/Indigenous Relations Advisor who will be joining the Trust in mid-July. She has a PhD in Indigenous Governance and a Master's Degree in Resource and Environmental Management. Her experience includes working for the Ts'elxwe'yeww Tribe and Sto:lo Tribal Council as a policy advisor, and teaching in the Indigenous Studies programs at U Vic and Univ of the Fraser Valley.

Trust Area Services works with Statistics Canada to support accurate communications and informed decision-making regarding land use planning and advocacy. Work began in 2016 to collect and provide census infographics with comparisons across the Trust Area for population growth and density, demographics, dwellings, average home owner and rental costs, rates of inadequate housing, and median income.

Planners and Trustees have also asked for a census infographic showing the trend in number of dwellings in each jurisdiction over time. The infographics are posted to the Islands Trust website's Trend Monitoring page and to each Local Trust Area page.

I find the infographics interesting for several reasons; one being the wildly varying patterns across the Trust Area for some measurements, and the markedly similar statistics for others. Occasionally there are interesting notations, such as: 'with high global non-response rate, the 2016 census data for Lasqueti Island should be used with caution'. Seeing as the bar graph for 2020 is identical to 2016, one might assume that more recent data for Lasqueti should also be used with caution. I do remember a visit from Gabriola to Lasqueti a few decades ago when my host ushered me into a vehicle with no door handles or licence plates and only one window, while residents (I assumed) on the dock looked at me as if I'd come from Mars. Perhaps that's how a census-taker feels when arriving on lovely, quiet, and sometimes quirky Lasqueti?

Islands Trust Conservancy

The ITC gives a quarterly report at Council meetings and this one had some significant updates: 2 new Board members appointed by the province – Ken Thomas from the Penelakut First Nation and Charles Kahn, a well-known natural history author on Salt Spring, soon to join the Board.

The ITC is doing its part to meet the federal and provincial goals of 30% protected areas by 2030. Currently only 20% of the Islands Trust Area (ITA) has protected status. A priority for the ITC since the pandemic has been collaboration with conservation partners such as GaLTT and the Nanaimo Area Land Trust. Collaboration across the ITA this past year includes working with Parks Canada, the province of BC, First Nations artist Eliot White-Hill, and local groups and individuals who wish to help protect and restore threatened ecosystems.

The ITC is committed to increasing protected areas for the benefit of all living species in the Trust Area. They do this through the creation of nature reserves and conservation covenants – legal agreements with landholders to care for nature that are designed to last in perpetuity. Protected areas safeguard biodiversity and unique ecosystems found nowhere else in the world, and they benefit people by providing clean water and air, resilience against the effects of climate change, and they contribute to social and psychological well-being.

The latest Conservation Area was added last month, when landowners and long-time conservation stewards Christine Ferris

and Doug Hopwood worked with the ITC to place a conservation covenant on 11.35 hectares of forest and wetland on Xwe'etay/Lasqueti Island. They chose to register the covenant through the Islands Trust Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP), which also lowers future property taxes for the protected area. Ms. Ferris stated, "A big factor in our decision to put a covenant on the land was our awareness of the climate emergency. Conserving forests, along with eliminating fossil fuels, is essential to the future of humanity and nature." The covenant protects habitat for species at risk, including the northern red-legged frog, western toad, and little brown bat.

The Islands Trust Conservancy also dispensed 3 Opportunity Fund Grants this past year: \$50,000 to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for the purchase of Reginald Hill on Salt Spring; \$6,000 to GaLTT for the Nature Stewards Program (eminently successful to date); and \$30,000 to the Raincoast Conservation Foundation for the purchase of KELA' EKE Kingfisher Forest on North Pender Island. The Opportunity Fund supports hard-to-fundraise costs associated with land protection, and leverages donations via matching funds for land acquisition campaigns.

Presentations to Trust Council

A significant advantage of in-person Council meetings is 'field trips' at lunch breaks, and Gabriola excels at providing interesting projects and places for Council members to visit. Our Wednesday lunch break included a visit to GIRO where the innovators of the C2C textile project/building explained how and why the 'cradle to cradle' project began, and what the exciting prospects are for our community when the building is completed and the textile machinery and space is ready to roll. Thank you Michelle Kresnyak and Fay Weller for the superb lunchtime learning session. Trustees were excited to head into the main GIRO building to check out that arena too, and buy a few C2C items.

The Tuesday evening pre-dinner entertainment was a rousing review of Gabriola's Climate 12-12-12 year-long project: 12 wicked climate change problems, with numerous solutions provided by Gabriolans at monthly events where ideas and energy run high, wild, and free! Steven Earle and Fay Weller from the Climate 12-12-12 Project did a great job of inspiring all of us around the Council table to take on climate change in practical and imaginative ways. Saturna Trustee Mairead Boland commented afterwards on how refreshing it was to learn about positive local projects tackling this existential and mostly terrifying topic.

Wednesday's pre-dinner presentation was from Gabriola Trustee Tobi Elliott: "Walking in Truth: Unsettling, Decolonizing and Learning Relational Ways of Being for Key Organizations on Gabriola".

We heard former Islands Trust Senior Intergovernmental Policy Advisor Lisa Wilcox as part of Tobi's audio presentation, and I noticed several Trustees looking tearful when they heard Ms. Wilcox's sobering words about how to honour the real meaning of reconciliation. Joining each other for dinner afterward and discussing Tobi's work and how it relates to the Trust's commitment to reconciliation made this Council evening particularly memorable for me.

Just prior to Trustee Elliott's presentation we heard from 2 experts in the learning field of Local Governments in Reconcili-Action, Brent Mueller from Municipal Affairs, and Lisa Bhopalsingh from the City of Nanaimo. Both presenters described their experiences and insights on how local governments can start good conversations and build relationships with First Nations in whose territories they work. I found Ms. Bhopalsingh's ideas and comments very practical, and the examples she described of how Nanaimo is building trust and working collaboratively with Snuneymuxw First Nation are based on how she speaks and acts: "Listen and try to understand, even if you don't agree," and "Reconciliation is about two things: respect and love." I'd listen to her again any day.

September's Trust Council meeting will be on Pender Island, (Sept. 26-28) with a proposed presentation from San Juan County Council, an Office of the Ombudsperson Report, updates from Staff Directors and all of the Council Committees (where much of Council's work is done) and I'm hoping for a field trip to one of the new Nature Reserves.