

# Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities Convention April 2024

Report to Trust Council by Trustees Elliott, Maude, Patrick

## Overview (Trustee Maude)

Generally a valued and informative gathering with many networking opportunities. Highlights were the Friday housing session (see notes by Trustee Patrick), which broadly outlined the new legislation and impacts. However many repeated messages that the Islands Trust area was excluded (Bowen Island however was included). The Saturday Wildfire and abandoned boats workshops were well-curated with excellent presenters.

The Saturday Morning session on Shared Decision Making on Regional District Boards was perhaps the most valuable session in regard to direct relevance to the Trust. The perspective from both the Regional Districts and First Nations was very informative and gave broad concepts as to how this works and a vision as to how this could be adopted for the Trust.

It was disappointing that the Transportation Minister in his address made no reference to Roads or Ferries – he made broad references to many issues, but none specifically related to our island communities.

I was very pleased that our Resolution with regard to requesting the Province review the Guidelines and update the Manual on Composting Toilets and Greywater Management was endorsed and will be forwarded to the Union of BC Municipalities, and heard many positive comments over the weekend about this initiative.

## housing, Housing, HOUSING (Trustee Patrick)

### *Short-Term Accommodation Act*

Housing Ministry staff presented information on the Short-Term Accommodation Act.

- Announced that host and guest information, along with a definition of hotel will be released soon. On April 18, 2024 the province provided this information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/short-term-rentals/information>
- Staff admitted that rental data is “crappy”.
- Acknowledge that bed and breakfasts are different from short term rentals, but the audience’s groan indicates widespread challenges.
- Enforcement of the principal residence requirement will be achieved through online methods.
- Gabriola and Bowen are the only LTAs to have opted-in to the STAA
- Local bylaws must enable short term rentals for the Act to apply.

## *BC Builds - Lisa Helps*

- Launching a site to match zoned land with developers/proponents
  - low interest financing and grants
  - 80% units at market, 20% below market, operated by non-profits, First Nations dev corps, public entities
- Admitted that it is difficult to finance projects on septic systems, also not working with health authority on rainwater harvesting, nor amendments to BC Building Code
- BC Builds appears to be ready to assist with facilitating projects: Project Team is a “rocket ship” for supporting development and design of project
  - uses low cost land, low interest financing, grants, and speeds up project timelines to reduce how long it takes to build
  - Compared to how co-op housing was started out, initially was market housing but over time has become the most affordable option.
  - up to \$225,000 per unit for non-profits, First Nations dev corps, public entities to build
  - A. Gibsons project, New Commons Development and Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society: 33 units + childcare for 24 spaces, pre school daycare and before and after school care (added on after 3 months)
  - B. North Vancouver catalyst community development society: finance 100% of the building 3 story neighbourhood house, then 15 stories above of housing
  - C. Cowichan Tribes and Khowutzun Development, 199 units-- difficulty financing on septic systems, need servicing
- What works: standardized designs: First Nations are rapidly putting up 4- and 6-plexes in the same format

## *Cortes Island Housing Approaches*

- Electoral Area Director Mark Vonesch rocks.
- Reported 1% unhoused (pop 1100), 10% unstable housing, 175 on waiting list for rental housing, and 1/3 of homes are empty (240 empty homes)
- Utilizing 100% of MRDT on housing, which is resulting in 20-30K/year
  - first community in BC to use the tax entirely for housing
  - 3% tax, \$30,000 per year is used as leverage to help apply for more funding, goes directly to the Cortes Housing Society
- Opted into short term rental accommodation act. Thinks more legislation should have opt in aspects, for example the speculation and vacancy tax.
- Has a wish list of changes they would like to see:
  - including buying houses that are already built
  - grant funding support for landlords to retrofit existing housing for rentals
  - new tenancy legislation is too much... adjusting the laws more in favour of landlords
  - owner builder exam

- o up zone for non-profits (e.g., convert existing single-family homes to multiplex).
- o reforming the transfer tax to divert some funds to local housing projects – YES.
- They are looking at using the Cortes Housing Society to provide intermediary help to landlords. Formed a housing service at the Strathcona RD with up to \$10 Million in debt approval
- They are seeking Real Estate Foundation Funding for an aquifer study. They hosted a forum on watersheds and aquifer health on April 20.
  - o Laura Patrick attended the event. There is strong interest in improving sharing of information across the islands, cooperating in developing regional conservation plans, regional management plans and advocacy.

### *Homelessness - The Village Approach*

- Duncan Mayor presented information on The Village. Laura Patrick visited The Village with a contingent of Salt Springers on March 29. This supported housing project is the result of local government leadership, strong community action, and First Nation involvement.
- The 33 pods are in “flower petals” – three circles of 11 pods each. The statistics with this project are impressive. It’s making a difference, and the project team openly shares their learnings.
- Courteney is continuing to use “Maple Pool” to address homelessness, a local campground. They are visioning Maple Pool 2.0 using “We Can” shelters.
- The Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness Poverty Reduction Assessment & Strategy. [https://cvhousing.ca/content/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2021-09-17\\_cvrd\\_poverty\\_reduction\\_strategy\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://cvhousing.ca/content/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2021-09-17_cvrd_poverty_reduction_strategy_final_web.pdf)

## **Civic Culture Plenary Session (Trustee Elliott)**

### *Addressing Culture Risk, Fostering Social cohesion*

I was impressed by the keynote presentation by author Diane Kalen-Sukra. She wrote [“Save Your City”](#), in response to what appears to be a crisis in toxic culture, and issues a call to civic leaders to resist the incivility that is becoming so prevalent in local government, and renew our commitment to restoring civic culture and values. Every local government is undergirded by culture, and no government can be successful without a strong civic culture.

As a former city manager and CAO, Diane talked about how we can nurture civic spaces rooted in respect, compassion and ethical relations, and how elected leaders must work to counter the increasing toxic culture that results in low work output, high staff turnover rates, and wasted resources and time. She had been CAO for a local government that was in chaos: couldn’t produce financial statements, mass staff

turnover, dysfunction among council members. Through a process of aligning the values and purpose of Council and staff, and deep work on governance, they turned the ship around.

Toxic culture undermines our democracy, healthy culture increases resiliency: 40% of elected officials report they won't run again. "Incivility anywhere is a threat to civic culture everywhere." We must ask: "what is my responsibility in weaving the social fabric for our communities, and my role as a civic leader to unite the people and model that for citizens? Rediscover our WHY, to point to our shared purpose: local government exists to provide for local wellbeing of citizens: economic, social and environmental wellbeing. Watch for "gang cohesion": us and them mentality, might vs right, common enemies and personal advantage, emotional appeals.

## The TRC's Calls to Action in BC Municipalities (Trustee Elliott)

WTC's *Women Transforming Cities* research report

Key findings: <https://www.womentransformingcities.org/trc-calls-to-action>

With guidance from Indigenous leaders and organizations, Women Transforming Cities applied their experience and relationships with local governments in BC to understand:

What **progress** municipalities have made towards implementing 10 Calls to Action that are explicitly directed toward local governments?

What **barriers** are slowing and stalling action

What local government leaders need in order to **accelerate action**

The TRC's calls to action are based on testimony from 6000+ residential school survivors, family, and former staff over 5 years. The roadmap to address the legacy of residential school and "advance the process of reconciliation" for all sectors of Canadian society are deeply intertwined with UNDRIP.

Read each call to action in the Context of the final report to understand

- what harms is it addressing
- what it aims to accomplish
- how it is relevant to you
- how you can opt into action

If a CTA is about improving access to health care... don't think, "I don't work in health. Can I put aside space for elders to gather in a healing space?" It's a lens against which all government's work is assessed against. It is already your job to do. "The idea that this work should be indigenous-led is often used by settlers to say 'this isn't our job'. The work should be informed by Indigenous protocols and knowledge but it is settlers' jobs." - Dr. Kisha Supernant

A brilliant panel discussion ensued, consisting of: **John Alan Jack**, Sayaac áth, Chair of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) since 2016, elected Chief Councillor for the

Huu-ay-aht First Nations (HFN), **Trina Isakson**, Councillor, City of Powell River, **Reece Harding**, partner at Young, Anderson. They shared legal, local government, and First Nations perspectives. The Declaration Act is “calling for some kind of shared decision making... a collaborative framework for decision making agreement that is trying to push the dialogue, have decision makers see from others' perspective with a consensus-based approach.” Harding cited an example of First Nations working with local government and the Province with flood mitigation strategies in Abbotsford.

## Oceans, Oceans, Oceans (Trustee Elliott)

*Shoreline Armouring Mapping - Resilient Coasts* - <https://resilientcoasts.ca/>

One of Resilient Coasts' projects are mapping the southern Gulf Islands (with a boat) to locate and map coastal hard armouring/rip rap, high log accumulation on beaches, overwater structures. Nanaimo to Comox in 2023, Ground Truthing via tender, kayak, on foot. This spring continuing northward and south to southern Gulf islands. There will be publicly available maps that can be used by planners. They do community-based programs such as Shoreline mapping workshops.

*Green Shores*: a nature-based solution framework with the four foundational principles that benefit people and the environment. FREE Green Shores training is available for community members and residents, not just planners. Level 1 is a 1-day course is for anyone interested in a comprehensive introduction to the Green Shores.

[resilientcoasts.ca/building-capacity/green-shores-training/](https://resilientcoasts.ca/building-capacity/green-shores-training/) for info on where to register.

*Marine Reference Guide* - <https://marinescience.psf.ca/>

The Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) / University of British Columbia's Strait of Georgia Data Centre have a mapping tool that collates and visualizes nearshore and marine data. The Marine Reference Guide (MRG) is an interactive data visualization tool, with layers of ecological, anthropogenic, and oceanographic data, and information on how these data can inform our interactions with the sea. Data from the Resilient Coasts for Salmon project shows the extent of coastal modification across the east coast of Vancouver Island. For coastal municipalities, this means greater access to important information for decision making. These will be publicly available maps that can be used by planners.

ITC staff are aware of the Strait of Georgia Data Centre and often look at it when assessing shoreline properties. We've also contributed some data in the past. Some of the data represented there is island specific or area specific and doesn't cover the entire Islands Trust region, so it's really important to note that sometimes lack of a mapped feature doesn't constitute its absence. It could be missing because the area wasn't part of the mapping project. Strait of Georgia Data Centre - <https://sogdatacentre.ca/>

*SGIs + Mayne Conservancy: Bullkelp and Eelgrass monitoring*

I asked if the MRG partners with the Islands Trust or Conservancy, and they do make use of ITC eelgrass mapping data (from 2016). However staff note that eelgrass mapping is not currently prioritized in the ITC Regional Conservation Plan and isn't on any of our work

programs. RPC decided not to fund Phase II of the Eelgrass mapping polygons. The references that ITC currently has available help to adequately assess shorelines when we are looking at potential conservation properties. It may be that there is more of a need for better mapping for planners when it comes to assessing development proposals, rezonings, etc., probably a topic for RPC to consider further.

Further research (not highlighted in the session, but of local interest) uncovered that the Mayne Island Conservancy is monitoring and contributing geospatial datasets for **eelgrass extent** and **bull kelp surface extent**. The 2023 field data for Eelgrass extent monitoring at select sites in the Southern Gulf Islands 2009-2023 is linked here:

<https://mayneconservancy.ca/eelgrass-monitoring-update-2023/> It is also available on the Strait of Georgia Data Center here:

<https://soggy2.zoology.ubc.ca/geonetwork/srv/eng/catalog.search#/metadata/3f1ed7b0-6bbd-42f9-bcb9-6f8964ac84c5>

MA Conservancy also monitors **Bull Kelp** in the Southern Gulf Islands at select sites. “The 2023 field season marked the 14th year of bull kelp monitoring by the Mayne Island Conservancy, and the 5th year since the monitoring program expanded to include partners on other Southern Gulf Islands. This past season 33 volunteers and staff from five organizations spent 178 hours on the water. Volunteers recorded a total of 31.23 hectares of bull kelp at 17 annual monitoring sites around Valdes, Galiano, Mayne, the Penders, and Saturna Islands. This was also the first year we compared year-to-year change in kelp area for sites beyond Mayne Island. We have created a site-by-site summary of results (available here) for all sites where we have at least three years of data.”

<https://mayneconservancy.ca/bull-kelp-2010-2023-14-seasons-of-monitoring/>