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See "Looking Back, Looking Forward" pieces from community groups and leaders throughout this issue of the Driftwood.



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  - Country Grocer
  - Home Hardware
  - No Frills
  - Pharmasave
  - The Vitamin Shop
  - Thrifty Foods



# Driftwood

GULF ISLANDS

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Issue 1  
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PHOTO BY SHAILJA CURELL

From left, Stocking Stuffers for Seniors co-coordinator Kim Ballantyne with Greenwoods Eldercare staff Trish Staicesku and Nikki Hanssens with some of the 116 gift bags and 50 hand-crocheted "lapghans" given to seniors on Salt Spring Island before Christmas. Ballantyne thanked Country Grocer, Thrifty Foods, Salt Spring Kitchen Co., Salt Spring Soapworks, Salt Spring Dental and the many other donors for their support of the grassroots initiative that was started in 2022 to give seniors some holiday cheer.

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## NSSWD

# District eyes federal funding

Infrastructure grant could obviate need for Maxwell plant tax hike

BY ROBB MAGLEY  
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Trustees and staff at Salt Spring's largest water district may have a path toward a seemingly improbable zero per cent tax increase in 2026, should the will of ratepayers — and of a federal funding program — swing their way.

The hope comes despite the need for a new water treatment plant at Maxwell Lake, mandated by Island Health last year and incorporated into the North Salt Spring Waterworks District's (NSSWD) resiliency-building plan — a multi-pronged long-term roadmap that also includes a provincially-funded \$10 million raising of the weir at St. Mary Lake and a significant pump station upgrade, enabling bi-directional supply of domestic water from either of the district's lake sources.

Now, both the \$14.6 million Maxwell Lake plant and the \$1.78 million Crofton Road pump upgrade are part of a grant funding request, according to NSSWD CAO Mark Boyesen, who told district trustees Thursday, Dec. 19 staff had raced to submit a timely application with the Canada

Housing Infrastructure Fund — a \$6 billion source, with much of that available for improvement districts with projects that will remove barriers to new housing supply.

If successful, that funding could cover up to 40 per cent of the projects.

**“What it could potentially look like is that we would be able to just hold at a \$300-a-year surcharge and not have to go up.”**

MARK BOYSEN  
NSSWD CAO

“I’ll bet we were one of the earliest applicants,” chuckled Boyesen, crediting the district’s extant resiliency plans for a speedy and well-sourced application. “I think we’re in good shape, at least we put our best foot forward.”

Without figuring in the grant funds, existing reserves and projected revenues allocated for the required Maxwell Lake plant leave an \$11.7 million shortfall, necessitating a loan whose annual payments are already on the books, even while district ratepayers will need to vote

to approve the borrowing itself.

“The discussion we quite often have in the office is that we’ve been required by the province to build this, but we have to get approval from our ratepayers to pay for it,” said Boyesen. “The other alternative — not getting a loan — is not a good story. It’s a very expensive option.”

2025’s annual \$300 surcharge — rising to \$400 in 2026 — is already approved by the board, but the grant’s potential \$6 million reduction in the amount needing to be borrowed could cut the annual payment on a loan by half.

“What it could potentially look like is that we would be able to just hold at a \$300-a-year surcharge,” said Boyesen, “and not have to go up.”

The proposed Maxwell Lake plant has a final design and loan authorization through a referendum in the spring, with work beginning in early 2026. Updates from the district to Island Health on the plant’s planning process seem to have satisfied that agency, according to operations manager Ryan Moray, who told trustees there had been no concerns expressed with NSSWD extending the construction timeline.

“We will be bringing forward an ask, to confirm a process for that loan authorization,” said Boyesen. “If I can bring grant news to that discussion, that would be great.”

## IN THE TREES

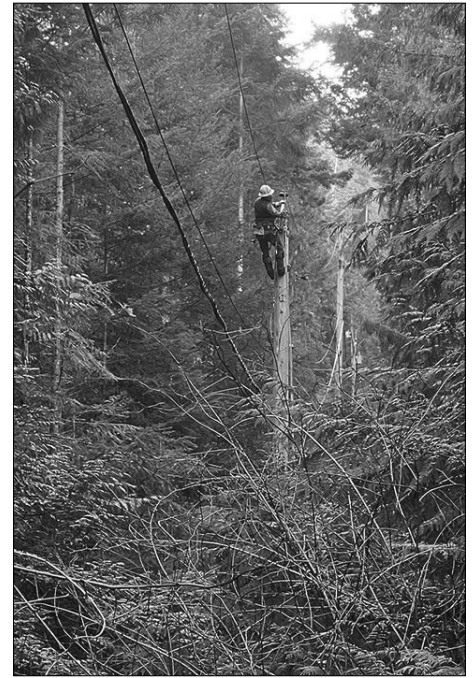


PHOTO COURTESY BC HYDRO

A BC Hydro crew member works among the trees on Mayne Island to restore power following a mid-December storm that saw more than 320,000 customers without power in the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. While a number of homes lost power briefly during the Dec. 24-26 period, the impact of a predicted windstorm was fortunately not as severe as anticipated.

## HEALTH CARE

# Island's Opt Clinic faces closure due to rising costs

Board asks for letters of support to MLA

BY ROBB MAGLEY  
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A sexual and reproductive health clinic on Salt Spring could join dozens of others across B.C. facing closure, organizers say, unless the province comes through with additional funding.

Founded in 1997 as a Planned Parenthood branch, the Options for Sexual Health office

on Salt Spring — the “Opt Clinic” — has been on the second floor at 134 McPhillips Ave. since 1998 (except for a short period when the building was being renovated), delivering information, education and healthcare; from contraceptive management and STI testing to gynecological referrals and screenings for cervical cancer, its clients are often the most vulnerable among an estimated 4,000 islanders without a family doctor.

If the Opt Clinic here closes, organizers say, those essential services will fall out of reach, particularly for those unable to afford — or even arrange — a trip off-island.

In a statement earlier this month, Options for Sexual Health’s board of directors said that after years without increases in its provincial funding levels — while nursing wages in B.C. have risen — the majority of the organization’s network of 52 clinics will be shuttered.

“The possibility of having to close many, if not all, of our clinics comes after more than a decade of operating under significant financial strain,” read the open letter. “With no substantive increases to our core funding during this time, rising healthcare costs, inflation, and the growing cost of living have

outpaced our ability to meet the demands of need for our health care services.”

Options’ board said it has sent a letter to Premier David Eby to request additional funding. In the meantime they are urging supporters to add their own voices to the conversation — by contacting their MLAs to ask for them to support the funding request.

There is no current appeal for funds from the community, but organizers have launched an online petition which had 175 signatures at press time: [change.org/p/save-salt-spring-island-options-for-sexual-health](https://change.org/p/save-salt-spring-island-options-for-sexual-health).



## MARINE RESCUE

# Quinsam ferry crew rescues sailor

Dinghy towed in strong winds and darkness

BY ROBB MAGLEY  
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Crofton-bound ferry passengers got front-row seats to a surprise marine rescue last week, as crew members from MV Quinsam diverted to assist a small vessel in distress.

A small dinghy had been fighting a losing battle with nearly 10-knot winds late Thursday night, Dec. 19, and the single person aboard sent up flares for help, according to BC Ferries. The Canadian Coast Guard spotted those flares, ferry officials said, and relayed a request for assistance — as MV Quinsam was right in the area, on its last run of the day from Salt Spring’s Vesuvius Bay.

Quinsam’s crew quickly spotted the distressed sailor and launched a rescue boat, ultimately towing them to shore, BC

Ferries said. Vessel tracking records indicate the ferry diverted a little less than a kilometre from its usual line to Crofton at about 10:40 p.m.

“Once ashore, our crew helped drain the rowboat,” according to a BC Ferries statement, “and towed the individual back to their sailboat.”

BC Ferries crews undergo “extensive” marine safety and emergency response training, said BC Ferries senior communications advisor Shiryn Sayani, and rescues like this are good examples of how the ferry company partners with emergency services on the water.

“We are incredibly proud of the dedication and skill of our teams,” said Sayani, “and the vital role BC Ferries plays in supporting and safeguarding coastal communities.”

Even with the rescue, the sailing back to Salt Spring was delayed just 44 minutes, according to ferry officials, who noted it was the second marine rescue involving ferry crews that week, and among more than a dozen in 2024. The operator of a capsize boat near Tsawwassen was helped on Monday, Dec. 16.

CRD/LCC

# Local government bodies complete busy year

Road safety advocacy, liquid waste, emergency prep and more on 2025 agenda

BY GARY HOLMAN  
SSI ELECTORAL AREA DIRECTOR, AND  
EARL ROOK  
SSILCC CHAIR

The Capital Regional District (CRD) and Salt Spring Local Community Commission (LCC) were busy in 2024.

The LCC capped off its first full year of operation by releasing its 2024-2027 strategic plan outlining its primary objectives for its delegated services. The electoral area director, who sits on the LCC and represents Salt Spring Island (SSI) at the CRD Board, works with the LCC on these objectives, and on regional, inter-agency and advocacy issues of importance to Salt Spring.

The LCC and CRD director continue to broaden engagement with other agencies and organizations, including Islands Trust, North Salt Spring Waterworks District (NSSWD), Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue (SSIFR) and the Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership (SGITP). The LCC is also working with the CRD director in reviewing and making recommendations to the CRD Board regarding such matters as CRD bylaw enforcement impacts on agriculture and expansion of LCC authority.

Housing is Salt Spring's top economic priority. The LCC, which convened two related public and stakeholder meetings in 2024, is taking the lead in developing an integrated housing strategy for SSI in collaboration with the Trust, NSSWD and other local organiza-

tions. The LCC is also working with CRD Housing, which is establishing another regional housing fund, as well as a Rural Housing Program (with support from the SGITP) initially aimed at Salt Spring and Southern Gulf Islands electoral areas.

The CRD has been involved with three affordable housing projects (Drake Road supported housing, Bittancourt health-worker housing, Dean Road boarding house), totalling over 60 units of affordable housing to be completed in 2025. The LCC recently leased the former Phoenix School property from School District 64, and has just approved a winter warming space there for the underhoused. This property can provide additional affordable rental space for important services and future possibilities for affordable housing.

The LCC is supporting the housing strategy through its economic development service, which also funds the Housing Now landlord-tenant matching program on SSI. Other LCC economic development initiatives include funding for the SSI Chamber's information centre and the Farmland Trust's Grow Local initiative. The Root food processing-storage facility and commercial-scale composter located at the Burgoyne Community Farm, both supported historically by CRD gas tax contributions, are now operating. In 2025, voters in the CRD will be asked to approve a new "Regional Foodland" service intended to facilitate farming on public lands.

The LCC grants-in-aid program for local community groups also provides socio-economic benefits in a number of sectors, including agriculture, the arts and social services. The LCC is proposing to increase the requisition for both of these important services in its 2025 budget.

Transit service on SSI has been maintained despite the ridership and revenue impacts of COVID. Since ridership has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, the LCC is considering a major service improvement on the Fulford-Ganges route for 2026, subject to provincial funding. The LCC will be consulting with the public next year on the significant increase in the transit requisition that would also be required.

**The LCC, which convened two related public and stakeholder meetings in 2024, is taking the lead in developing an integrated housing strategy for SSI in collaboration with the Trust, NSSWD and other local organizations.**

In anticipation of fleet expansion on SSI and BC Transit's commitment to electrify its fleet, the LCC is planning to co-locate transit bus storage and charging with a new parks maintenance facility on its Kanaka Road property. Work continues on expanding the number of bus shelters along island routes.

Transportation is front and centre with work on the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MoTT) \$23-million repaving of Ganges Hill negotiated by the CRD and former SSI Transportation Com-

mission. The project will be disruptive until completed next year, but the much wider shoulder lanes will greatly improve pedestrian and cycling safety. The LCC is proceeding with another sidewalk and cycle lane improvement on Rainbow Road while beginning work on the Active Transportation Management Plan for downtown Ganges, including consideration of parking impacts and options.

The LCC is advocating to MoTT on issues such as speed limits and road maintenance, and is working with stakeholders on the Salish Sea Trail, including Island Pathways, which has been instrumental in furthering CRD active transportation initiatives. For the first time, CRD Parks has approved funding for design and construction of the Vesuvius-Central portion of the Salish Trail over the next several years. CRD voters will be asked in 2025 to approve a new regional transportation service.

Parks and recreation, the largest LCC service, completed renewal of the Centennial Park market court and devolved management responsibility for the Saturday Market to the SSI Saturday Market Society. Improvements were also made to the SIMS facility and programs.

After extensive public consultation, the Portlock Park Master Plan was completed. Funding for Sunday pool openings was reinstated. With voter approval, a major expenditure to repair the pool building envelope is planned for 2025. Consultation with First Nations and the public continues on a management plan for the new Mount Maxwell Community Park. The LCC will also be seeking input on the re-purposing of the Ganges fire hall site. An announcement regarding the proposed Ganges Harbourwalk will also be made next year.

The LCC is working to identify the best option for de-watering our liquid waste on island to reduce costly off-island trucking. This service has been amended to include organics, allowing support of the composter at the Burgoyne Valley Community Farm. Provincial funding was also secured to increase capacity of the Ganges sewer system.

The CRD Emergency Program is working with all of its partners, particularly SSIFR, in preparing for extreme events. As previously, the CRD has secured provincial FireSmart funding for 2025 and 2026, a portion of which is allocated to SSIFR for initiatives on SSI such as property fire safety assessments and chipping. Opportunities for including invasives in the chipping program will be explored. In a related matter, CRD voters will be asked to approve a new regional service to better manage invasives and protect biodiversity.

SSIFR is now constructing our new, post-disaster fire hall with the assistance of a \$1-million gas tax grant from the CRD. Our community's resilience will also be enhanced by the just opened emergency room at Lady Minto Hospital, funded largely by generous donors to the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation, as well as \$3.7 million from the Capital Regional Hospital District.

As detailed in a previous Driftwood article, the proposed CRD requisition increase for 2025 is about 13 per cent. This budget is particularly difficult due to unavoidable costs such as inflation and the reverberating impacts of COVID, but also the need to preserve existing services and aging assets. Comments on the provisional budget can be made up until the LCC public meeting of Jan. 30 at saltspring@crd.bc.ca.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# Community-building sees results

Making Salt Spring an even better place to do business

Key achievements of the Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce from 2024 include:

- **Restoring Financial Stability:** Resolved outstanding grant obligations, bringing the Chamber back into compliance with funding bodies. New grants were also secured to support operations and community initiatives.
- **Enhancing Membership Value:** The Chamber launched a state-of-the-art digital membership platform and directory at SaltSpringDirectory.com. These tools have improved member services, simplified renewals, and made the Chamber's offerings more accessible and inclusive.
- **Building Community Connections:** A reinvigorated focus on engagement included successful initiatives such as Member Mixers, the Convergence Festi-

val, a revitalized newsletter and refocused Information Centre. These efforts brought together businesses, residents, and visitors, strengthening the Chamber's role as a community leader.

• **Advocating for Local Solutions:** The Chamber focused on the critical advocacy issues of affordable workforce housing and short-term rental policies, working closely with stakeholders to develop a balanced, sustainable approach to both that would meet the needs of the business community.

As the Chamber looks ahead to 2025, priorities include increasing membership, driving further financial stability, and expanding support for local businesses. The Chamber is looking forward to leveraging the momentum generated this year with a 2025 seasonal membership drive enhanced with new promotional opportunities and InfoCentre operations.

Reflecting on his tenure, outgoing executive director Matthew Quetton shared, "Leading this turnaround has been a privilege. Together, we've laid a

strong foundation for the Chamber's continued success and feel optimistic about the future and grateful for the chance to serve this incredible business community."

Stay tuned for updates on 2025 programs and events that aim to make Salt Spring Island an even better place to live, work and do business.

## Retrospectives

The above two pieces are among several in this issue of the Driftwood provided by community groups and leaders that look back on activities and accomplishments in 2024 and forward to 2025. They are also found on pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11.

A note as well about this edition: due to holiday deadlines, it was sent to the press on Friday, Dec. 27. Check our gulfislandsdriftwood.com website for news that may have occurred since that date.



**Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District  
2025 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Schedule**

Regular Meetings are held at the Ganges Fire Hall Training Room, 105 Lower Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island

January 20, 2025	7:00 p.m.
February 24, 2025	7:00 p.m.
March 17, 2025	7:00 p.m.
April 28, 2025	7:00 p.m.
May 26, 2025	7:00 p.m.
June 16, 2025	7:00 p.m.
July 21, 2025	7:00 p.m.
August 18, 2025	7:00 p.m.
September 15, 2025	7:00 p.m.
October 20, 2025	7:00 p.m.
November 17, 2025	7:00 p.m.
December 15, 2025	7:00 p.m.

# OPINION

2023 CCNA Awards  
Gold - Best Editorial Page | Gold - Best Local Cartoon (Dennis Parker)  
Bronze - Best All Round | Bronze - Best Front Page

2023 BCYCN Awards  
Gold - Best All Round (for circulation Category C)  
Gold - Community Service Award



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## EDITORIAL

# Willing partners

**H**oliday season newspapers can be a challenge for editorial staff everywhere, to put it mildly.

Press deadlines are often shifted since everyone takes time off; and the usual flow of news-making events also shuts down.

In order to ensure you had something good to read in these pages, we asked a handful of community groups and leaders to provide what we called "looking back/looking forward" pieces, inviting reflections on accomplishments of 2024 and a glimpse of plans for 2025.

We think the result is inspiring; akin to opening a door on a bustling workshop-like atmosphere of focused activity and achievement. While we obviously report on what's happening each week, when the writing reins are given to the doers, as they were this week, the collective images and details are more vivid somehow.

## THE ISSUE: Getting things done on Salt Spring

## WE SAY: Partnerships are key

One facet that stands out is the fact that local organizations rely on many cohorts in order to meet their goals. We often characterize Salt Spring groups and governance as operating in silos, but the picture that emerges from this week's submitted pieces is that it's not really true. Collaboration with other groups (and receiving critical funding support in some cases) is a persistent theme.

One such collaboration is making its debut next week, when Restorative Justice Salt Spring Island personnel lead the first Restorative Dialogue Circle at ASK Salt Spring on Jan. 10, and continuing on the second Friday of each month. Use of these circles to hold difficult conversations in a safe environment has enormous transformative power, increasing mutual understanding and helping to heal rifts among members and groups in our community.

The Driftwood, of course, relies entirely on collaboration and partnerships in order to do what we do. We would love to be able to thank each person individually for their contributions to these pages in the past year, whether it came from a casual conversation, an interview or a written submission. Instead, we hope you know who you are and appreciate that we are sincerely grateful for your shared words and deeds.

Happy New Year from all of us at Driftwood Publishing Ltd. We look forward to interacting with and serving our readers and community every day in 2025.



# Looking back leads to future

BY LAURA PATRICK  
SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL TRUSTEE

## VIEWPOINT

In 1994 a task force of Salt Springers noted that our island economy had changed dramatically since the '60s. Once primarily resource-based, it had become tourism and retirement focused but the mix of housing hadn't changed.

Zoning bylaws, which govern what kind of housing we can have, were created in 1971 and had barely changed. The group even noted that the Islands Trust had "done more to hamper the creation of an appropriate housing stock than help it." It was this task force that coined the phrase that still exists today in the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan (OCP): "To recognize the very real, if intangible, loss that is felt in the community when this diversity is diminished by external pressures and changes."

With each subsequent task force, working group or consultant's report that followed, the results and recommendations remained the same and yet little action was taken, even when a "crisis in paradise" was declared in 2002.

Now here we are, still trying to change those same 1971 zoning bylaws to improve the mix of housing to support our community. And we wonder — why are there so many people living in RVs and on boats?

Looking to 2025, the Trust will kick off yet another tweak on our OCP and land use bylaws (LUB) in hopes of improving the mix of housing types on offer to our working community. However, this brings to mind that famous quote from Einstein: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result."

With the complexity of our local governance and the lack of consistent public communication of the facts, advancing any planning initiative on this island is more than challenging and presents fertile territory for

the rumour mill. For example, if you believe what some are saying about the upcoming OCP and LUB updating project, you'd think that we've already decided to "pave paradise" from Southey to Isabella Point and build rows of rows of housing for tens of thousands of new residents. I cannot say it more plainly; we are not.

I know that people are fed up with waiting for results. I'm fed up too. Please don't check out now. Our best ideas for how to proceed will come from the community. I want to co-create solutions for the OCP and LUB with you through a collaborative approach. I've been fighting an uphill battle since the last election to get the organization to agree to a new way of engaging with the community. Doing things differently is probably a stretch for the Islands Trust. It has grown accustomed to hearing the opinions of those who show up to meetings on a weekday afternoon. And those who show up on a weekday afternoon have grown accustomed to dominating the Trust's engagement processes. This must stop. The doors must be opened, and the fresh air of new voices must be let in.

My attempts to lead improvements have attracted the ire of those who fear change. What you might not know is that both the current OCP from 2008 and its predecessor from 1998 recognize that things change. One of our jobs is to monitor and see if the community goals are being achieved and, if necessary, amend the policies to better reach our community objectives.

The mandate of the Islands Trust in the context of today's challenges and priorities remains valid. In 2025, let's fulfill our OCP objective to "identify creative and proactive ways through which a diverse, livable and vibrant community can be created within the confines of our island's finite land base and resources."

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**THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION:**

**Do you make New Year's resolutions?**  Yes  No

**LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:**

**Did you have a special meal on Christmas Day or Boxing Day?**

14 NO 79 YES

Cast your ballot online at [www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com](http://www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com) before Monday at noon, or clip this box and drop it at our office before Monday at noon.

# ISLAND VOICES

## LETTERS to the editor

### Island Pathways reports on busy year

This year held many great events and projects to advance safer walking and cycling pathways on Salt Spring Island.

From a Kids Bike Park Rally and BBQ, to a youth mountain biking movie night, to adult social rides and an ebiking safety course, our Cycling Salt Spring Committee has engaged all ages. We've had fun distributing free helmets for children, selling maps and connecting with community at schools, the Tuesday and Saturday markets, the Volunteer Fair, Salt Spring Film Festival and Fall Fair, and offering free bike repairs at Transition Salt Spring's Repair Cafe.

The Salish Sea Trail Working Group, including the Capital Regional District (CRD), Islands Trust, ministries of transportation and tourism, and other partners, convened by Island Pathways and former MLA Adam Olsen, resulted in CRD Regional Parks and the federal Active Transportation Fund developing a preliminary design for a multi-use pathway from Fulford to Vesuvius. Regional Parks has allocated \$630,000 for design and outreach work over the next two years and millions for construction beyond that.

The Partners Creating Pathways Committee also had a productive year, with a new pathway at Brinkworthy completed in November, and plans under development for Brinkworthy Phase II, which will extend the trail to the entrance of the Brinkworthy complex. This is a great example of how Salt Spring Island collaboration works between a volunteer organization (Island Pathways), the CRD, the Local Community Commission, Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture, the CRD director, private party land dedication and the contractor, Sam Erk.

Plans are underfoot for additional collaborative pathway construction between Kanaka Road and Park Drive, the Swanson Road/Lakeview Crescent Pathway, and the long-anticipated extension of a pathway to Merchants Mews. The new Woodland Cliff Trail is being considered by the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club for insurance coverage and maintenance, and we have entered into discussions with Country Grocer regarding pathway improvements on their property and near the Summerside Strata. Three new benches (numbers 49, 50 and 51), built by Donald McLennan, were also installed along trails.

In 2024, the board updated our logo and commenced a strategic plan, with a focus on connecting, building and good health. In 2025, please look forward to a new website, along with two

exciting volunteer-driven programs. One will use our ebike-driven bike lane sweeper to clean up gravel and debris. The second is the launch of a Salt Spring chapter of Cycling Without Age, offering safe bike rides on our new electric "trishaw."

We'd like to extend deep appreciation for outgoing board members Natasha Kong and Michi Main and a warm welcome to our newest board member, Neal Barman. Bob MacKie, Wendy Webb, Steve New, Luke Campbell, Simon Rompre, Margaretha Nordine, Peter Meyer and Naomi Tweddle carry on! Many others lead and participate in committees and special projects.

We invite you to join us to achieve safe active transportation infrastructure on Salt Spring. Become a lifetime member, donate or sign up for our newsletter at [islandpathways.ca](http://islandpathways.ca).

**ROBIN JENKINSON,**  
FOR ISLAND PATHWAYS

### Blinding headlights dangerous

Am I the only one blinded by headlights of certain vehicles on the road?

I think not, as I have asked other people about their experiences of driving at night.

Our roads are not level and the slightest elevation causes the headlights of the oncoming car/truck to suddenly flash upwards, temporarily blinding the driver of the opposing vehicle. The white line at the edge of the road is not visible on dark, wet nights and I fear there will be a serious accident as a driver swerves to avoid the blinding headlights on our dark, narrow, winding and hilly roads. Drivers a lot younger than I have told me they try to avoid driving at night.

The RCMP must be aware of this problem and I would appreciate a response about what is being done to remedy these ghostly and dangerous halogen lights.

**DIANA SYMONS,**  
SALT SPRING

### Salt Spring is ready to take Toronto's cast-offs

Ontario Premier Doug Ford has announced Toronto doesn't need three of its bike lanes. We'll take 'em!

Salt Spring needs bike paths for safe cycling.

**STEVE NEW,**  
WHIMS ROAD

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

**"The doors must be opened, and the fresh air of new voices must be let in."**

Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island Trustee, on receiving input from islanders

## Hard to focus on the positive with another dismal year on the horizon

I'm not going to beat about the bush, pussyfoot around the undeniable fact that I am more than slightly old and getting older by the minute.

I know, I know, you would never have guessed but I am almost in my dotage and I'm not entirely happy about it, so as another year collapses in on itself I grow increasingly miserable about the future.

So, Happy New Year to those of you who are too young to feel old yet while the rest of us hunker down for the short haul to the hereafter. To be frank, and without wanting to be too much of a Weeping Jeremiah, this new year, now just one day old, is inevitably shaping up to be a pig. The year 2024 was a disaster, so why should 2025 be any different?

It doesn't take too much sorting through the chicken entrails to get a sense of where it's all going to go wrong, and whose fault it will be. Politicians, that's who. Politicians — local, national and international — are going to make

our lives miserable because it's what they're good at. In fact, in the great tapestry of life, it's just about all they ARE good at.

Oh, I know there are some who mean well, the Goody Two-Shoes who want to put things right, but their right isn't always my right and, given today's political polarization, that right would be wrong at least 50 per cent of the time. And even then, there is never a political maneuver that isn't at least debatable, if not totally infuriating!

Cockerels are a case to point. Or at least they were on Salt Spring. The roosters presumably ended up in an inedible casserole somewhere, but not before the island was riven as it so often is by the perceived rivalry between townies and yokels. Karens and Sylvia Sunshines.

On any issue on the island, as it was this time, the "them and us" invective is as depressing as it is nonsensical. But at least it never came to blows, although there were some jolly



**Paul McElroy**  
+ ANOTHER THING

harsh words aimed at our own dear trustees and commissioners and, in any case, I'd lost the will to live before it was resolved and forget now who won. Not the cocks, I'd imagine.

Elsewhere in the world, meanwhile, politicians were engaging their militias in blowing the bejezus out of their neighbours. Israel is massacring Palestinians in retaliation for Palestine's Hamas murdering some locals, Russia's Putin, a snotty little man with a Napoleon complex, was getting his butt kicked by Ukraine although winning re-election as president of the Russian Federation was probably a high point for him. His 90 per cent approval rate was a triumph, but not quite so much for the scores of

opposition politicians he jailed or encouraged to jump from 10th-storey windows.

Would that it was that easy for Donald Trump, who remains convicted of 34 counts of falsifying his accounts to cover-up the fact that he'd apparently been boffing a porn star but, hey, who's counting? Certainly not the Republican party and a substantial proportion of the American voting public who put the slimy toerag back in the White House. But let's not dwell on that, cheerless as it is. It is an absolute certainty that Trump and his coterie of creeps are going to make 2025 a miserable affair for anyone with less than a billion dollars in the bank, but there really isn't much we can do about it, so let's focus on the positive.

(Although, if Trump condescends to Canada and the simpering Trudeau one more time, I shall personally write a very strongly worded letter to the newspapers. Enough is enough, you mess with Canada at your peril, Trump!)

Our own options, apropos national leaders, aren't exactly appetizing. Poilievre is positively revolting, only slightly more repugnant than Trudeau with a moras of mediocrity in between. And that's assuming that by the time you read this (and because I'm too bone idle to consider rewriting it and it's been Christmas, for crying out loud) Justin hasn't already fallen on his sword. Sigh.

B.C., meanwhile, is more or less in the hands of two very Green MLAs, so that's all good then.

Still, all is not lost. The Icon of the Seas, the world's biggest cruise liner, was launched early in 2024, a prefect repository for the world's politicians, 20 stories of floating hell, a Dante's Inferno of the High Seas, capable of holding 8,000 people. Stick the worst of them on it, tow it out to sea, and while the polies argue over their duty-free pina colodas, sink it.

[paulmcelroy@shaw.ca](mailto:paulmcelroy@shaw.ca)

# Actions help protect drinking water resources

SUBMITTED BY SSI WATER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

The Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society (WPS) was founded in 1982 to protect the sources of drinking water on Salt Spring Island, promote research into local water resources and increase public awareness of the value of water resources.

Over the last 42 years, members have provided important input to ensure public policies recognize the vulnerability of our freshwater supplies, and safeguard this critical gift of nature. A special event in 2024 was the granting of a well-deserved B.C. Community Award to longtime WPS members Wayne and Doreen Hewitt, in recognition of their 30 years of persistent work to protect water resources on Salt Spring Island.

One of the most significant WPS accomplishments in recent years is the Freshwater Catalogue. This has been a very successful citizen-science project, collecting data and local knowledge to improve our understanding of the diversity, quantity and quality of the island's surface and groundwater. We appreciate the valuable contributions of numerous volunteers who've monitored streams, lakes, ponds, springs and wells over a six-year period. Loads of detailed information and links, including one to an interactive web-map, is available at [sites.google.com/view/freshwater-catalogue/home](https://sites.google.com/view/freshwater-catalogue/home).

Anyone interested in contributing to this important research project would be very welcome, and is asked to contact us at [ssiwps@gmail.com](mailto:ssiwps@gmail.com).

WPS is a partner with the local Climate Action Research Lab group, which is working to improve the hydrology and fire resistance of the Maxwell Lake watershed, one of Salt Spring's main sources of potable water. This project is increasing knowledge about restoration practices, and is gaining the attention of experts throughout B.C.

Over the past year, WPS also collaborated with Raincoast Conservation Foundation and other local groups studying the health of the waters of Fulford Bay. Peter Ross, who oversees Raincoast's Healthy Waters program that monitors water pollution, presented a very interesting and informative public talk about invisible pollutants impacting freshwater, oceans, wildlife and humans in June. In addition to providing information on the Freshwater Catalogue and WPS websites, we submitted an article to the Driftwood for World Water Day in March, explaining how our interconnected watersheds and natural systems are key to our island's continued freshwater sustainability.

We enjoyed talking to people at our booths at the annual film festival and fall

fair, and are always open to hearing water-related concerns and feedback from the public. We offer personalized water catchment tours, and hope to have more public education events in the coming year.

Currently, WPS has concerns regarding the North Salt Spring Waterworks District's proposed lifting of the moratorium on water connections. We look forward to discussions with NSSWD and the community about this critical issue in the coming months. We will continue to monitor local, regional and provincial policies that affect water, and provide thoughtful input to safeguard sustainability into the future. WPS owns 337 acres of watershed lands, mostly under strict conservation covenants, and stewards these to protect the ecology and thus the health of the water resources they provide.

This past summer, students from Ocean Wise helped us remove garbage from a legacy landfill site near critical wetlands on the Larmour lands. Every year we remove invasive weeds such as broom and tansy, plant native shrubs, grasses and forbs, and monitor all of these special properties. We were pleased to learn that endangered sharp-tailed snakes have been found on our St. Mary Lake Watershed and Nature Reserve this year. It's very important that people walking in this sensitive reserve near

Channel Ridge stay on the trails, keep dogs on leash, and refrain from riding bikes and horses. Signs outlining the rules are posted, and we ask that everyone abide by them to protect the drinking water used by numerous households.

Members of the public can help safeguard our island's water resources by being mindful of their water usage and conserving water as much as possible, especially during the summer. Letting lawns go golden, mulching and using water catchment systems for gardens, taking short showers, flushing less often, running only full loads in dishwashers and washing machines, installing low-flow fixtures and asking visitors to avoid wasting water are simple changes that add up to important savings.

Another role for citizens is to work toward creating change in provincial and federal water conservation policies. Writing letters to elected officials supporting improved stewardship of water resources, and joining stakeholder organizations such as WPS that amplify the voices of individuals, are concrete actions we all can take to protect this most precious resource.

We encourage anyone interested in learning more or becoming a member of the Water Preservation Society to contact us at [ssiwps@gmail.com](mailto:ssiwps@gmail.com).

# Early indications show strong housing support

BY MAIRI WELMAN AND ELIZABETH FITZZALAND

SALT SPRING SOLUTIONS

Salt Spring Solutions is a small, volunteer-run, non-profit organization dedicated to balancing environmental protection with creating a vibrant, diverse and equitable community. Right now, Salt Spring is neither diverse nor equitable. Our population is aging, and it is increasingly difficult for younger community members to stay here, raise a family, work for or own a business, farm, or create art because they can't afford to rent or own suitable long-term housing.

Since 2018 Salt Spring Solutions has been deeply immersed in understanding the complexities of and finding solutions to the island's housing crisis. We think the primary reason for the failure to take innovative approaches to housing here is due to a lack of coordination between governments (provincial, regional and local) and a lack of visionary and savvy leadership at the political and senior management level. As an island community, self-contained and isolated by water, we could become the poster child

for how to use innovative ideas to make a community that works for all its people, but our institutions seem paralyzed, and every year that passes without action means more of our vital young community members move away, and many farmers, workforce families and individuals, lower-income seniors and longstanding islanders feel pushed aside, unheard and unrepresented.

Our 2023 report, Homes for Islanders, which was written by professionals with experience in inclusive community development and peer reviewed by planning and environmental professionals, policy and governance experts and housing specialists, was designed as a starting point to address housing inequities while fostering community resilience and environmental stewardship on Salt Spring. A year after publishing the report, government responses ranged from a pat on the head and zero action from the province to paralysis at the Islands Trust to the promising new dedication of resources and staff for the creation of a Rural Housing Program at the Capital Regional District.

Ironically, many local elected officials who ran on a "housing" platform don't seem to have a handle on public opinion here regarding housing, often deferring to a small, well-organized and vocal group of anti-housing advocates. So, we decided to test our ideas with the Salt Spring community, see what you think, and then provide that input to decision-makers.

We hosted seven focus groups with 42 participants; renters of all ages and means, local employers, people in precarious housing and the local workforce. The focus groups were held in the evening in the library. This approach fostered low-barrier, intimate and meaningful discussions, allowing us to hear directly from those who are more impacted by housing decisions, whose housing experiences are often overlooked and/or who cannot attend government meetings held during working hours.

We also interviewed 12 local housing providers: landlords of legal and illegal housing, as well as those who have or would like to build housing for other islanders. Offering a confidential one-on-one

interview allowed people to be candid when discussing the challenges and motivations of providing housing, delivering valuable context and insights into the rental market on Salt Spring.

Then we cast a wide net with an online survey open to the whole community. Of the 657 people who responded, 67 per cent are homeowners. The survey ensured that the whole community could share their perspectives, helping to create a truly comprehensive understanding of public opinion on housing across the island.

We look forward to sharing the results of the whole public engagement project in the new year. In the meantime, some early findings from the online survey:

- There was significant support for ensuring that services, particularly water, are prioritized for rental and non-market housing. This reflects an understanding of the need to safeguard essential resources to support the development of affordable housing while considering the island's sustainability.

- There is strong support for prioritizing land for rental and non-

market housing. This aligns with the community's desire to address housing needs for diverse populations, ensuring that affordable options are made available where they are most needed.

- There was concurrently strong support for pre-zoning land in Ganges for housing. This indicates that our community is in favour of planning ahead to ensure adequate housing land is available in the most suitable areas, particularly near the village, to reduce sprawl, support walkability and provide more social connection.

- The core of Ganges village is expected to be significantly impacted by sea-level rise in the coming decades; 86 per cent of our survey respondents support identifying areas outside the projected floodplain for infrastructure investment, new development and homes that the community can support.

You can read our 2023 Homes for Islanders report and learn about our housing solutions at [saltspringsolutions.com](https://saltspringsolutions.com). Be among the first to hear the complete results of our public engagement project in the new year by signing up for our e-newsletter.

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**ARTSPRING**

## 2024 a banner year for ArtSpring



PHOTOS BY KIRSTEN BOLTON

From left, ArtSpring executive and artistic director Howard Jang and Treasure Fair coordinator Catherine Griffiths celebrate a record-breaking Treasure Fair fundraiser, and community events and rentals manager Meghan Howcroft at the 25th Anniversary Festival.

### Anniversary festival among highlights

BY KIRSTEN BOLTON  
FOR ARTSPRING

In a year full of milestones to celebrate, challenges to tackle and opportunities to connect, the highlight of 2024 at ArtSpring was undoubtedly its 25th Anniversary Festival in April, corresponding with the date of the ribbon cutting by Birgit and Robert Bateman in 1999.

Opening its doors after over a decade of planning, fundraising and construction setbacks, ArtSpring was a venue willed into existence by the passion and resourcefulness of a motivated community.

Today, it has earned a reputation not only as a centre for the island's many professional and amateur artists, presenters and students but as the premiere arts venue across the Gulf Islands for attracting regional, national and international performing artists. This past year saw some of the best of both streams of programming.

The 25th Anniversary Festival captured this sentiment as it shone the majority of the spotlight on community talent, with a few special events such as two sold-out headliner Jim Cuddy Band concerts, both opened by local up-and-comer Salome Cullen. For added resonance, it was uncovered that Blue Rodeo, the trail blazing Canadian band Cuddy co-founded in the 1980s, performed at an early fundraiser for ArtSpring.

Japanese drummers, an Everyday People dance party potluck, adult and youth choirs, a basket-weaving workshop, a rock-painting station, open mics and a sit-down with cultural commentator Max Wyman about the state of the arts in Canada — it was a five-day festival jam-packed with creativity and exchange.

Produced by Christina Penhale with support from ArtSpring staff and almost 100 volunteers, the festival welcomed close to 2000 visitors and engaged 290 individual artists, speakers and performers as part of 46 different groups or acts.

Another milestone in 2024 for ArtSpring was Treasure Fair, its annual marquee fundraising event every July. The fundraiser achieved its highest-ever result in part because of the generous donation of a

1956 Porsche Speedster replica to auction, along with a particularly strong turn-out for other collectables, experiences and donations to the "new lobby carpet" campaign.

In August, ArtSpring was proud to announce another first by establishing a \$1-million Legacy Endowment Fund managed by the Victoria Foundation, which was sparked by a generous legacy bequest from a former ArtSpring board member known for his musical mentorship. This is the initial phase of what ArtSpring hopes will grow to become a \$5-million fund to help secure its financial sustainability moving forward.

**"By partnering with BC Live and other Vancouver Island presenters, we can collectively agree to attract certain artists because they can do a mini tour that is worthwhile and we all benefit."**

HOWARD JANG  
*ArtSpring executive and artistic director*

The challenge of funding and financing in the arts was a theme ArtSpring faced in 2024, like so many other arts organizations around the world. The post-pandemic fallout, shifts in the touring landscape and sharply rising costs on everything from artist booking fees to travel to utilities has made it increasingly difficult to survive.

More than ever, strong partnerships became the answer for executive and artistic director Howard Jang.

"By partnering with BC Live and other Vancouver Island presenters, we can collectively agree to attract certain artists because they can do a mini tour that is worthwhile and we all benefit," said Jang. "ArtSpring was able to pull off a season filled with top-notch performances that delighted and inspired, and it reinforced

the impact of what we can accomplish when we come together."

When pushed to identify some of his favourite ArtSpring Presents performances, Jang is reluctant in a season so robust.

"My highlights include the intimate performances of 'These Are Songs I Sing When I'm Sad' hosted at The Stonehouse property, which was an experiment in off-site venues for us," said Jang. "Also coming to mind is the multi-day Matriarchs Uprising, a celebration of performances and workshops by Indigenous choreographers, a stunning world premiere from the Gryphon Trio, and Deb Williams' two-day personal storytelling workshop which just had the most funny, uplifting and vulnerable outcome with participants. Such a joy."

The new 2024/2025 season exploded in October with the controversial Cliff Cardinal one-man show of Shakespeare's As You Like It aka "Land Acknowledgement," which polarized and challenged audiences, along with ArtSpring's first-ever hip hop concert from Snotty Nose Rez Kids. October and November saw a record six shows sell out, including the Banff Mountain Film Festival, Tentacle Tribe dance and O-Celli — eight cellos on stage with a salute to the movies.

Expanding audiences and community connections was important in 2024, not just in terms of programming that appeals to different audiences and ages, but outreach and communications.

The Angel Ticket Program got its wings by making the arts more affordable at only \$15 a seat for any ArtSpring Presents performance. The volunteer Roundtable Committee rolled up its sleeves to advise on public programming and organize community-directed events such as the "Pre-history of ArtSpring" panel and the children's Halloween party as a tie-in to Victoria Ballet's performance of Frankenstein.

The first meeting of a new Youth Advisory Committee comprised of island teens took place, and ArtSpring's selection as one of only six B.C. arts facilities to participate in a mental health analysis called Arts on Prescription puts this island arts organization in good company in making the claim and the argument that the arts have a measurable positive impact to people's lives.

**POETRY**

## MacWilliam leads open mic night

Jan. 9 at the library

BY DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The first Poetry Open Mic night of 2025 on Thursday, Jan. 9 features Adelia MacWilliam, who Salt Spring Islanders may remember from a Raised by the Sea art, tea and poetry event she put on with her cousin Briony Penn in November of 2022.

According to a Salt Spring Public Library media release, "When Adelia did her poetry thesis at the University of Victoria, she discovered that if you cast the mythic imagination across a piece of land that has always been part of your life, everything will out. What she encountered amidst the remnants of a stunning wilderness — a savage history, with its culturally sanctioned amnesia — changed her view of her home forever."

The complexities of being part of a settler culture struggling to create a home in a world that is simultaneously gutting are explored in her Details of the Passage chapbook and poems from her current manuscript called Films the Dead Are Showing.

MacWilliam's work can be found in various publications, including Drift, Poems and Poets from the Comox Valley, (The Poem Factory), Sweet Water, Poems for the Watersheds and, most recently, 'Counterflow', a digital magazine from Nanaimo's WordStorm.

MacWilliam is also one of the three co-editors of Cascadian Zen Volume One and Two (Water-shed Press), an anthology that brings together non-fiction, poetry and translations that explore expressions of Zen within the Cascadia bioregion.

Sign-up for the open mic starts at 6:45 p.m., with one poem allowed per reader and three minutes max. The evening begins at 7 p.m. with the featured poet taking the mic at about 7:30 p.m.



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SALT SPRING ARTS

# Exploration of the arts nurtured for all ages

Supporting artists, inspiring creativity and connecting community

SUBMITTED BY SALT SPRING ARTS

The year 2024 has been a vibrant and inspiring one for Salt Spring Arts (SSA), marked by a renewed mission to build and nurture the creative capacity of our community. Through annual community programming, strategic support for artists and engaging public events, we continue to strengthen the profound role that art plays in enriching lives and creating connections.

**Supporting Artists:**

At the heart of our mission is the unwavering support for local artists of all disciplines, in all stages of their career. In 2024, Salt Spring Arts distributed over \$220,000 to emerging and established artists through meaningful opportunities to showcase new works and share their creative practice.

This year, SSA presented five exhibitions featuring the work of 23 Southern Gulf Islands artists, including rotating Artcraft Showcase Exhibitions and our guest-curated Spring Art Show. These exhibitions resulted in exposure to over 13,000 visitors. Our Artist in the Class program engaged 17 local artists in delivering hands-on arts education to youth, and the Summer Outdoor Concert Series featured live performances by 23 local musicians. Artcraft Gallery and Shop, SSA's flagship program and the largest and longest-running exhibition of its kind in B.C., featured and sold handcrafted products by 179 local artists. Artcraft's rebrand also introduced an intentional investment in promoting local makers through digital marketing initiatives.

**Inspiring Creativity:**

Salt Spring Arts is passionate about introducing the transformative power of art and creativity to both younger generations and those who are interested in exploring new artistic mediums.

In 2024 we delivered in-house workshops and summer art camps for kids, designed to encourage creativity and innovation. We invited 300 kids from local schools to visit and tour exhibitions at Mahon Hall, often engaging with the artists featured. Artist in the Class delivered 150 hours of creative workshops by professional artists to students in



PHOTO BY METTA ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Taking in a fine art exhibition hosted by Salt Spring Arts at Mahon Hall in 2024.

Salt Spring Island classrooms.

In addition to arts education opportunities, SSA also presented two public exhibitions featuring the work of local young artists. The Spring Art Show's Youth Exhibit, Home As We Know It, displayed photographs taken by Gulf Islands Secondary School photography students. During Artcraft Winter, the Annex Gallery walls were lined with art created by local kindergarteners through Artist in the Class workshops. 2024 also saw the launch of our Kids Craft Tent initiative: pop-up booths at eight local events offering fun and interactive craft activities that inspired the imaginations of hundreds of kids.

**Connecting Community:**

Salt Spring Arts' cultural events bring together people from all across our diverse community, creating spaces for dialogue and celebration of the arts. Our programs in 2024 saw a total of 20,000 attendees through exhibitions, concerts, workshops, public events and more. Our annual Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues to bring together a broad cross-section of our community, creating vibrancy in Ganges, and our B.C. Family Day Event is often

young kids' first introduction to live music and theatre.

For SSA, partnerships highlight the power of what's possible when we work collaboratively. This year we worked directly with the Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce to present the third annual Convergence Festival, helping to secure funding so the event could remain free for all to attend. This day-long event transformed a central parking lot in Ganges into a space to celebrate Salt Spring's unique culture and foster appreciation of local music.

SSA also partnered with the Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership to launch an exciting new cultural calendar website: GulfIslandEvents.com. This initiative was created in response to a longstanding local need for an online events hub, connecting artists and audiences with rich local culture. The site makes it easy to discover and share the incredible local events happening in our community.

**Looking Forward:**

Salt Spring Arts is looking ahead to exciting changes in 2025, including welcoming our new executive director Jennifer Van de Pol to the team. Jennifer's innovative art education and programming work at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and Nanaimo Art Gallery over the past decade have been centred in collaboration, and developing cultural understanding in deeply respectful ways.

We are thrilled to have the opportunity to grow our Artist in the Class program next year, connecting local artists with local schools, thanks to the Foundation of Youth grant from the Salt Spring Island Foundation. This new funding allows us to deliver more in-class hours of arts education to Salt Spring Island kids while also offering paid opportunities for local artists to share and develop their creative practice.

In his hometown and in his 95th year, we are honoured to be presenting a collection of Robert Bateman's lesser-known works in 2025 as our Spring Art Show: Unexpected Bateman. This exhibition unveils lesser-known facets of his oeuvre, challenging assumptions and inviting viewers to reevaluate their perceptions and understanding of his work.

In 2025, our passionate board and staff continue our commitment to strengthening the arts in our community by creating transformative opportunities for artistic expression, connection and collaboration. Salt Spring Island is known far and wide as a culturally rich and creative community; the dedicated team at Salt Spring Arts continues to ensure that this is a place where the arts and artists thrive.

## what's on this week

**Wed. Jan. 1**  
**ACTIVITIES**

**Polar Bear Swim.** Vesuvius Beach. 12 noon.  
**Festival of Trees.** Today is the last full day to bring donations for the food bank and Copper Kettle to put under decorated trees. Harbour House Hotel.  
**Music Bingo.** At Moby's. 7:30 p.m.

**Thur. Jan. 2**  
**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

**Thursday Night Live.** Moby's Pub. 5 p.m.  
**Open Mic.** With Rough & Tumble at the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

**ACTIVITIES**

**Festival of Trees.** Winning tree determined this morning at the Harbour House Hotel.  
**Easy Does It Lunch Bunch Al-Anon Family Group.** Thursdays at the Seniors Centre. Noon to 1 p.m.

**Fri. Jan. 3**  
**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

**Karaoke.** With Drew at the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

**Sat. Jan. 4**  
**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

**An Intimate Evening of Music.** Alan Moberg; Wesley Hardisty; Bill Steiner and Mark Nordine as Garden Party. Legion. 7:30 p.m.

**Sun. Jan. 5**  
**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

**Open Mic At Salt Spring Brewery.** Every Sunday fro 2 to 5 p.m.  
**Jazz Jam With the Frank Allen Four.** Legion. 3 to 6 p.m.

**Mon. Jan. 6**  
**ACTIVITIES**

**Courage to Change Al-Anon Family Group.** Every Monday in the downstairs meeting room at the Baptist Church. 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

**Tues. Jan. 7**  
**ACTIVITIES**

**Trivia Tuesday.** Moby's Pub. 7:30 p.m.

**Wed. Jan. 8**  
**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

**GISS Theatre Presents: A Gap in Generations.** Fast-paced comedy by Jerry Blunt at Mahon Hall. 7:30 p.m. Also runs Jan. 9 and 10.

**ACTIVITIES**

**Swing Dancing.** At the Legion. 6:30 p.m.  
**Music Bingo.** At Moby's. 7:30 p.m.

**EXHIBITIONS**

- **The Salt Spring Photography Club's Annual Exhibition** runs in the ArtSpring lobby from Jan. 7 to Feb. 4.
- **Pierre Mineau** shows photographs in the cafe at Country Grocer through January.
- **Wendy of Gallery 59** shows artwork at the Salt Spring Coffee Cafe.

**A Gap in Generations**  
A GISS Theatre presentation  
Jan. 8, 9, 10  
Mahon Hall, 7:30 p.m.

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# ISLAND LIFE

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

# Restorative Dialogue Circle sessions begin

Initiative aims to build understanding

SUBMITTED BY RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SALT SPRING

In collaboration with ASK Salt Spring, we warmly invite you to participate in our monthly Restorative Dialogue Circles. These circles are a supportive space for community members to come together and explore divisive topics in a restorative way. In a time when division and conflict can feel overwhelming, these circles offer a chance to slow down, truly listen and connect with one another as neighbours and community members.

### What Are Restorative Dialogue Circles?

Restorative Dialogue Circles provide a structured yet inclusive process that encourages open and respectful conversation. We aim to cultivate understanding, compassion and shared humanity by using restorative practices and the power of peacemaking circles. These circles are not about winning arguments or finding quick solutions; they are about creating space to hear diverse perspectives, reflect

together and build bridges across differences.

Each month, we will focus on a topic that matters to our community. Whether addressing misunderstandings, exploring challenging social issues or simply sharing experiences, the circle is a place where everyone's voice matters. You don't need any prior experience — just a willingness to engage in open-hearted dialogue and listen to others with curiosity and care.

### When and Where?

Our first circle will be held on Friday, Jan. 10 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Going forward, we will gather monthly on the second Friday of the month at the same time. Our circles will take place at SIMS (the former middle school), in the Transition Salt Spring/Restorative Justice Salt Spring Island room. Light refreshments will be provided.

### Why Attend a Restorative Dialogue Circle?

- To Listen and Be Heard: Share your thoughts and experiences. Learn to truly listen to others, even when you disagree.
- To Build Connection: Meet others in your community and learn more about the people who share your world.

• To Cultivate Understanding: Explore topics that can feel difficult or divisive in a way that promotes curiosity and compassion.

• To Heal and Grow: Discover how restorative practices can help address harm, misunderstanding, and conflict in healthier ways.

### Who is Invited?

Everyone! These circles are open to all community members, regardless of their background, beliefs or experiences. We welcome diversity of thought, experience and identity. Whether you are familiar with restorative practices or completely new to the idea, your presence is valued and your voice matters.

How to Participate: Simply come as you are. We ask only for your presence, open heart and commitment to respectful dialogue. If you'd like more information or have specific questions, feel free to contact us at info@rjsi.org.

Let's Build a Stronger, More Restorative Community: When we come together to share, listen and reflect, we build the foundation for understanding and healing. These circles are an opportunity to strengthen our community, one conversation at a time.

tion at a time.

Mark your calendars for the second Friday of each month, and invite a friend or neighbour to join you. Let's create a space where everyone belongs and every story is honoured.

We look forward to seeing you at our next Restorative Dialogue Circle.

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## EDUCATION

# SD64: a year of progress and aspirations

School district goals remain focused on continuous improvement

BY JILL JENSEN  
SD64 SUPERINTENDENT

As the end of 2024 approaches, it is a fitting time to reflect on the strides Gulf Islands School District has made and to look forward to goals set for the coming year. This calendar year has been marked by significant progress and the implementation of a new strategic direction for 2024-2028. The overarching goal remains to foster a strong, healthy and sustainable system with children at the heart of all efforts.

### Key Achievements of 2024

**Walking Together Day with Angela Sterritt:** The district-wide event was a highlight in September, featuring Angela Sterritt, an award-winning Gitksan journalist. Angela shared her powerful journey from navigating life on the streets to becoming a prominent advocate for Indigenous women and girls, shedding light on systemic issues of colonialism and racism.

**Enhancing Student Learning:** Students have been successful in achieving their learning outcomes, a testament to the dedication of educators and the resilience of students. This success is also attributed to the importance placed on student voice. To help focus the district's strategic direction, students shared their thoughts and provided feedback to inform new goals and ensure that the educational experience is both relevant and engaging. The district also is proud to share that, this past year, the ministry reported a 100 per cent six-year graduation rate for Gulf Islands students.

**Policy Refresh and AP Updates:** This year saw a significant refresh of board policies and the updating of district administrative procedures (APs), ensuring alignment with the new strategic direction and the evolving needs of Gulf Islands learning community.

**Deeper Learning with Harvard:** Collaboration with Harvard has been instrumental in amplifying student voice and agency. Deeper Learning, as defined by Jal Mehta of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is about creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences that intersect identity, mastery and creativity. This approach is not only about learning outcomes but also about the experiences that shape

students, making it a powerful equity strategy. Our deeper learning focus is on student engagement.

**Compassionate Systems Awareness:** As a pillar of the Ministry of Education's Mental Health in School Strategy, Compassionate Systems Awareness has been a living commitment of the district's administrative team. It involves continuously practising care and attention, aspiring to greater clarity of mind and heart, and embracing kindness as a way of life.

**School Visits and Presentations:** Throughout the year, trustees, senior staff, and district partners attended numerous school visits and presentations, confirming that school plans align with district direction and strategic goals.

**Infrastructure Improvements:** The construction of universal washrooms at Gulf Islands Secondary School is expected to be completed and ready for use in January. Additionally, over the past two years, libraries in four elementary schools have been renovated, enhancing the learning environment for students.

**Sustainability Initiatives:** The district has made significant strides this year in sustainability efforts, with three electric buses now operating on Salt Spring Island, a new electric bus on Mayne Island, and another set to start on Pender Islands in spring 2025. This will bring the total to five electric buses serving over 55 per cent of the total routes across the district.

### Looking Ahead to 2025

As 2025 approaches, SD64's goals remain ambitious and focused on continuous improvement. Building on the progress made this year, the aim is to further embed the strategic themes into every aspect of work. Prioritizing student voice, equity and well-being will ensure that the system remains responsive and inclusive.

Our district continues its deep commitment to the ongoing work of anti-racism and anti-oppression, recognizing that this is a collective responsibility. We are dedicated to deepening our awareness and understanding, ensuring that all our efforts, as outlined in our strategic commitments, are rooted in anti-oppression and social justice.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude is extended to the amazing staff throughout the district. Their dedication and collaboration make it possible to place learners at the centre of all we do. Together, the district will continue to strive for excellence and create a nurturing environment where every student can thrive. We will care deeply, act wisely and find joy in each day.

Here's to another year of growth, learning and collective well-being.

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**Coming Events**

**THERE WILL BE A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CENTRAL COMMUNITY HALL SOCIETY**

Wednesday  
January 15th, 2025 at  
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**ARIES**  
Get ready to shine as the ultimate party planner. You'll arrange one of the most memorable events for your loved ones. Your enthusiasm will be contagious, especially when you get involved in the entertaining.

**TAURUS**  
Feeling lucky? You may want to consider buying a lottery ticket with your family — you might just hit the jackpot! You'll solidify plans with your loved ones, quite possibly going on a spontaneous journey.

**GEMINI**  
If family tensions arise, you'll be the master of defusing them with your creativity and problem-solving skills. You'll earn the title of family hero with your organizational finesse.

**CANCER**  
You'll succeed in uniting family and friends, overcoming the challenge of bringing together two families that are sometimes at odds with one another. Your attention to detail and generous nature will work wonders in easing tensions.

**LEO**  
During your next gathering, whether you're hosting or attending, your nurturing nature will shine through. You have a strong urge to be helpful, from serving to tidying up, you'll be the ultimate helper.

**VIRGO**  
Gatherings, big or small, will be your stage to shine. Get ready to steal the spotlight with your captivating remarks. You'll be surprisingly charismatic this week.

**LIBRA**  
Someone from a different background will join one of your gatherings. They'll stimulate your curiosity to learn about their culture and share more about yours. You'll introduce exotic tastes and music to spice things up.

**SCORPIO**  
You'll be the life of the party, lighting up the atmosphere and getting everyone in the mood to celebrate. Be smart on your late-night adventures; don't get behind the wheel after indulging in certain vices.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Now isn't the best time to overspend, but your generosity will warm hearts, even those of strangers. You'll also spoil yourself a bit.

**CAPRICORN**  
Parties and gatherings will be your playground because you'll feel the need to move, dance and relax. You'll come up with creative ideas and stimulating games to get everyone involved and participating in the festivities.

**AQUARIUS**  
Avoid staying up too late so you don't spoil your enjoyment of the festivities. Take time to catch up on your sleep or get rid of a nasty cold or flu bug.

**PISCES**  
Prepare for unexpected visits that might require extra effort and planning. You'll be fully committed to making it a memorable time for your loved ones. Remember to take care of yourself too!

**The luckiest signs this week: PISCES, ARIES AND TAURUS**



PHOTO AT LEFT BY DONALD SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY; PHOTO AT RIGHT BY GAIL SJUBERG

**SCENES OF THE SEASON:** From left, community members gather for the annual Christmas Day Free-be-do meal at Fulford Hall, while a contingent of Salt Spring Singers leads an animated version of The Twelve Days of Christmas under the gazebo at Centennial Park, before venturing into the rain for carol singing through Ganges on Sunday, Dec. 22.

# Library expands Indigenous focus, accessibility

Growth and collaboration celebrated in 2024

BY ADRIAN WRIGHT  
LIBRARY BOARD CHAIR, AND  
KAREN HUDSON  
LIBRARY DIRECTOR

The Salt Spring Island Public Library has seen exciting new developments over the past year, with a focus on enhancing accessibility, expanding Indigenous programming and increasing community engagement.

The library opened the year by upgrading its HVAC system with a Capital Regional District Community Works Fund grant, and began its role as a cooling centre during warm months, ensuring it remains a safe and comfortable space for all users.

Soon after, at the end of January, the library and Indigenous partners launched the new Indigenous Learning Area ITOTELNEW HÁUTW /Tatul' utew't-hw, which means "House of Learning" in the SENCOFEN language and "the Teaching House" in the Hul'q'umi'num language.

This space offers a welcoming environment to explore Indigenous culture and history as part of the library's ongoing response to the calls for action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report of 2015. The space features inspiring Indigenous artworks complementing a decolonized collection and continues to welcome and evolve as a frequently used and favourite library space among many patrons. It is funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Enhancement Grant, Salt Spring Island Foundation and the Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation.

In April, the newly renovated children's area was opened by Raffi. It now includes Indigenous wayfinding, which helps guide young readers through the library with meaningful cultural connections. The library extensively renovated the children's space, adding durable, eco-friendly flooring, vivid colours, curved mobile shelving and — coming soon — an indoor Indigenous mural by Quw'utsun' artist Charlene Johnny. Funding came from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Enhancement Grant, the Raffi Foundation for Child Honouring, the Victoria Foundation and the Salt Spring Island Foundation.

The new Indigenous Friendship Circle program provides a dedicated space for Indigenous networking and cultural activities. The program has quickly gained popularity, with weekly meetings bringing together community members to connect, share and learn. To date, 1,347 individuals have participated in various Indigenous programs, including the Friendship Circles, Reconciliation Reading Circles, Indigenous Art Markets and Indigenous Art Shows, which were unprecedented in our community as the first shows to feature a group of local Indigenous residents. Hundreds of Salt Springers attended these events!

Another important step in the library's outreach

efforts has been its strong relationships with local community organizations and non-profits. Over the past year, library staff have attended meetings, contributed to community events and co-sponsored programs that benefit the island community. Regular meetings with non-profit executive directors have further fostered collaboration, ensuring that the library remains an active and supportive partner in the community. These efforts have also extended to grant collaboration, helping secure funding for various programs.

The library's work with community groups is also on display through various art exhibitions. The library hosted the Pride parade on its steps in July and featured exhibitions in its foyer to promote the work of local non-profits. These displays have been particularly well-received by the wider island community, offering a platform for organizations to share their messages. In addition, the Program Room has become a hub for local artists with different abilities to display their work, including the Yellow Submarine group, which operates under the umbrella of Island Community Services or the Art Jam group, which includes underhoused individuals.

The library's programming included workshops and talks on important community issues from senior safety to transforming communal trauma to collaborations with the Historical Society, including the overflowing Hawaiian family event in the fall. Events also focused on the impact of climate change on Salt Spring Island, with discussions led by Transition Salt Spring on housing equity and ecosystem protection. These conversations are crucial for building a more resilient and

equitable community. One example of a stunning literary event was Brian Day's launch of his fifth book of poetry called The Making in September. Brian's reading spellbound the audience in an overflowing program room.

In addition, the library completed the first year of its Accessibility Plan, including new accessible Braille signage, demonstrating a continued commitment to making the library more inclusive and accessible to everyone. To finish off the year, the library removed overdue fines for patrons to reduce barriers for our community and increase access.

Overall, the past year has been one of growth and collaboration for Salt Spring's library. From expanding Indigenous programming and children's spaces, to building stronger partnerships with local organizations, the library has become an even more integral part of the community. With the support of the community and ongoing efforts to improve accessibility and foster inclusivity, the library is ensuring it remains a welcoming space for all islanders.

Looking ahead, the library is already planning and preparing new accessible activities and renovations, as well as exciting new programs.

**TIDE TABLES** PST (UTC-8h)  
**FULFORD HARBOUR**

DAY	TIME	FEET	METRES	DAY	TIME	FEET	METRES
1 JAN	07:39	11.4	3.47	5	01:43	3.3	1.01
	12:41	9.6	2.93		09:30	11.6	3.54
	15:19	9.9	3.02		16:06	6.4	1.95
	23:46	0.6	0.18		20:35	7.8	2.38
2	08:08	11.5	3.51	6	02:21	4.8	1.46
	13:30	9.1	2.77		09:54	11.6	3.54
	16:22	9.5	2.90		16:59	5.1	1.55
3	00:25	1.1	0.34	7	22:42	7.6	2.32
	08:37	11.6	3.54		02:57	6.4	1.95
	14:21	8.5	2.59		10:17	11.6	3.54
4	17:31	9.0	2.74	8	17:51	3.8	1.16
	01:05	2.0	0.61		01:18	8.1	2.47
	09:04	11.6	3.54		03:31	8.0	2.44
	15:13	7.5	2.29		10:39	11.6	3.54
	18:53	8.4	2.56		18:41	2.5	0.76

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To the readers who turn to us every week for the latest local news and stories, thank you for being there. We do it all for you.

As we approach the dawn of a brand new year, our mission remains the same as ever: to give our island community a voice. Thank you, once again, for allowing that voice to be heard.

On behalf of the entire team at the Driftwood, we wish you the happiest of holiday seasons and all the best for 2025.

**the  
LAST PAGE  
IN THE 1<sup>st</sup> EDITION**

*of* **2025**

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