

# OPINION

2019 CCNA Awards  
Gold - Best Editorial Page | Gold - Best Feature Series (Gail Sjuberg)  
Bronze - Best News Story (Elizabeth Nolan) | Bronze - Community Service

2021 BCYCA Awards  
Gold - Best All Round (for circulation Category C)



## Driftwood

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Tony Richards, MANAGING DIRECTOR

  
Nancy Johnson  
PUBLISHER  
njohnson@driftwoodgimedia.com

  
Gail Sjuberg  
MANAGING EDITOR  
news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

  
Lorraine Sullivan  
PRODUCTION MANAGER  
production@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

  
Johanna Walkner  
OFFICE MANAGER  
jwalkner@driftwoodgimedia.com

  
Emelie Peacock  
REPORTER  
epeacock@driftwoodgulfislandsmedia.com

  
Sky Marcano  
ACCOUNT MANAGER  
smarcano@driftwoodgulfislandsmedia.com

  
Dennis Parker  
CARTOONIST  
news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

### EDITORIAL

# Warmly connecting

**S**alt Spring is home to a new space that provides shelter both from the elements and from “human weather.”

The warming space, set up by a collective of Salt Spring Islanders, is made up of tents and a propane heater as well as seating and food in an area off the beaten path near Mouat Park. Organizer Kajin Goh explained that people can gather here and connect to others with relatable life experiences. Here, they are not alone in what Goh calls the “human weather,” whether that is isolation, trauma, crisis or loss.

The space is also part of an effort to reduce harm and prevent deaths from a poisoned drug supply, and to ensure more friends and family members don't die alone, which continues to occur throughout B.C. because of individuals' trauma and the opioid crisis.

Goh and the collective behind the warming space are taking an approach to human struggles that is very human. They are focusing on connections with others as a way to keep people safe and well.

**WE SAY:**  
Human connection a way forward

Participant Sherman Sherwood, who has lived a transient lifestyle and experienced mental trauma and physical issues, found in providing peer support he also gained greater clarity around his own issues. “Once you're waist deep in it, you're like “Oh my god. I'm helping myself by helping others or other people are helping themselves by helping me...It's pure magic,” he said.

“The opposite of addiction isn't sobriety, the opposite of addiction is connection,” said Johann Hari in a TED talk viewed over 9.4 million times. Hari, who began his work to understand the people he loved who also used substances, makes the point that genuine human connection and unconditional love are needed at every level of our response to anxiety, depression and addiction.

Researchers have shown that when we experience loneliness our bodies are flooded with the stress hormone cortisol, and that loneliness causes anxiety and depression.

The opposite of that, human connection, is a basic need for all of us. Becoming curious about, understanding and supporting initiatives in our community that create spaces where these connections can happen is a worthwhile endeavour.

**THE ISSUE:**  
Mental wellness on Salt Spring

Other initiatives are also looking at human connection as a way forward. Mental wellness summits happening the first three months of this year are exploring how peer support and lay counselling could work



# Protection goals sabotaged

BY MAXINE LEICHTER

Many of us have long assumed that the Islands Trust area is a special place where the natural environment is protected. This belief is a mirage.

Whether or not the environment gets protected is actually left to the discretion of locally elected trustees. If we elect trustees who favour development over environmental protection, that's what we get. This means the Gulf Islands have no more protection than they would under any other local government.

How can this be? The Islands Trust Act clearly specifies that the “environment” and the “unique amenities” of the Gulf Islands are to be protected — but that protection has been eroded for years.

Our official community plan (OCP) contains mostly aspirational goals describing a utopia where every need, be it economic, social or environmental, is met. Even the few hard and fast mandates in our OCP, such as limiting the eventual population of the island to 17,000, have been ignored. For example, bylaws have been passed over the past few years allowing thousands of additional suites

## VIEWPOINT

and cottages with no requirement that they be affordable, or even go to island workers. And now our trustees are considering rezoning the entire island to allow for even more secondary residences.

The Trust Act requires that island bylaws be consistent with a policy statement adopted by Trust Council. But this requirement was subverted when Trust Council adopted a policy that local bylaws don't have to be consistent with the policy statement if there is “sufficient reason.”

To make matters worse, last year, during discussions on a new policy statement, Trust Council passed motions to redefine the object of the Trust to include “protection of healthy and inclusive communities including, but not limited to, housing and transportation.” How is that protecting the “environment” and “unique amenities” of the islands?

Motions to make protection of the natural environment a top priority were rejected by the

majority, including our trustees. Some trustees even argued that the word “environment” in the Trust object should be interpreted to include “people.”

It's easy and tempting to follow the same growth pattern as other communities. But that's not what the Trust Act says. Those who wrote the Trust Act would roll over in their graves if they could see how the words “environment” and “unique amenities” have been distorted to enable, rather than limit, development.

The voices in favour of continuing the current trend speak loudly. Protections will decline unless the community objects.

The Islands Trust Policy Statement is being revised this year. I urge you to write to our trustees at ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca and ask them not to violate population limits in our OCP, and to support motions at Trust Council affirming that the word “environment” in the Trust Act means “natural environment” and that “unique amenities” means one-of-a-kind features that do not exist anywhere else.

241 Fulford-Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island, B.C. V8K 2K7 | PH: 250-537-9933  
Email: driftwood@gulfislandsdriftwood.com | Website: www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com

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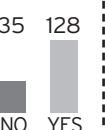
### THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION:

Will you appeal your property assessment this year?

Yes  No

### LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:

Should Islands Trust Council change its 2022 budget to reflect public opinion?



Cast your ballot online at [www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com](http://www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com) before Monday 2 p.m. or clip this box and drop it at our office before Monday at 2 p.m.