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December sunrise over Ganges Harbour.

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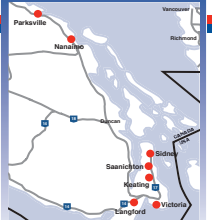
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## FIRE PROTECTION

# Search sparked for northern hall site

Fire coverage could expand to Southey Point

BY ROBB MAGLEY  
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The year 2026 may seem a little like the distant future, but Salt Spring's fire district is already looking past that expected completion date for the new fire hall — toward improving coverage on what will by then be a shifted protection landscape on the island.

Specifically, trustees for the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District (SSIFPD) are examining response times to fires, through the lens of the new Fire Hall No. 1 moving nearly two kilometres north from its current location.

A property is considered well-covered, and a homeowner's insurance ratings are most helped, when situated within eight kilometres of a fire hall, according to Fire Chief Jamie Holmes — not as the crow flies, but along connecting roadways. By this time next year, there will be overlapping coverage between Hall 1 and the satellite fire hall at Central — Hall 3, at the intersections of Lower Ganges, Upper Ganges, Vesuvius Bay and North End roads.

That inefficiency suggested to trustees there might be advantages to moving Hall 3 north, to potentially cover areas like Southey Point that haven't been within the eight-kilometre protection zone before.

"We think there's more bang for the buck further north, when we start to count houses and response times," said SSIFPD CAO Rodney Dieleman, who brought trustees a requested plan to start looking at whether that move would be feasible — or desirable — at their Dec. 16 meeting.

It's a long-term, forward-thinking notion; the ultimate goal would be an island-wide network with one main fire hall branching off to strategically located satellite halls, ensuring comprehensive coverage everywhere.

"What we really want to see is what are

the spots where you could cover the island completely, with the fewest number of fire halls," said Holmes. "And at that point you can determine if the population and densities support that. Or not."

To that end, the district will be pursuing confidential expressions of interest for acquiring new land to the north, first reaching out directly to entities like provincial ministries and the Capital Regional District — because, said Dieleman, "they may have land that we want more than they do."

And meanwhile, SSIFPD staff are collaborating with a copywriter to draft and publish what is essentially a "land wanted" ad, which will run in local publications and online through the first weeks of January. The hope is to garner expressions of interest from landowners, and ideas from the public, which Dieleman will present to trustees during an in-camera meeting Jan. 20.

"These expressions don't have to be 'I'd like to sell you my land'," said Dieleman. "It could be creative proposals; the board has flexibility at this point."

Any proposals for potential new sites would be evaluated and presented to the board with analyses of whether each increased or decreased coverage, or met fire hall requirements such as water, sewer, storage and sound — high bars, perhaps, but hopefully less complicated than choosing the site for Hall 1 necessarily became.

"These aren't \$15-million halls," said Dieleman. "These are garages to store equipment, for people to respond from."

A real estate appraiser took stock of Hall 3 earlier this month, Dieleman said, and the market value of the land and building should soon be available for trustees for their planning purposes.

"We're not saying we're selling the property," said Dieleman. "We're just accepting proposals so we can determine if it should be put up for sale, traded, swapped, donated or returned to the taxpayers."

On the other end, the relocation of Salt Spring's largest fire hall will lengthen response times to the south, at least

## IMPASSABLE



PHOTO BY TARA MARTIN

Muddy water pours across Isabella Point Road in the 400 block near the Hamilton Beach boat launch on the morning of Wednesday, Dec. 18, temporarily making the road impassable to vehicle traffic before Emcon road services staff arrived. The area is not the same place as other washouts seen on the road in recent years. Heavy rains that fell Tuesday evening and overnight into Wednesday caused flooding in a number of parts of Salt Spring Island.

before the eight-kilometre range of Hall 2 — the Fulford satellite fire hall — begins. Holmes and Dieleman said with areas such as the end of Beddis Road or the tops of Cranberry and Dukes roads losing some coverage, a second parcel of land for a mid-island hall between Ganges and Fulford might be a future project as well. It would be a smart, strategic place to store equipment, Holmes said, at least for a longer-term plan.

"But the centre of the island actually has pretty good coverage right now, even with the hall moving," said Holmes.

"Our two biggest [priorities] are Southey Point, and Beaver Point; if Beaver Point densifies, we would need to plan for a hall somewhere in that area."

Notably, Holmes said, as the North Salt Spring Waterworks District's moratorium on new connections eases, concerns about fire coverage for possible densification at Channel Ridge are, almost accidentally, alleviated.

"With Hall 1 moving north, it's actually within eight kilometres of the Channel Ridge site," said Holmes. "So we actually have coverage there, which is a bonus."

## Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee Regular Meeting Schedule 2025-26

The Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee will be meeting to consider land use applications, bylaws, correspondence, and various community planning topics.

Date	Time	Location
February 13, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
March 20, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
April 10, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
May 8, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
June 5, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
July 10, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
September 11, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
October 16, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
November 6, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
December 11, 2025	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
February 12, 2026	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island
March 19, 2026	9:30 a.m.	Salt Spring Island Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Rd, Salt Spring Island

The proposed meeting agenda is generally available one week prior to the meeting and will be available on the Islands Trust website. Meetings are subject to change.

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# OPINION

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

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



## Driftwood

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### EDITORIAL

## Checking it twice

It's been five years since the Driftwood's publishing date last landed on Dec. 25, meaning we have an opportunity to update our Christmas wish list for Salt Spring.

Santa seems to have had us mostly on his "nice" list since 2019, delivering many of the specifics we'd asked for. Our big-ticket item was a seemingly improbable repaving of Ganges Hill, now underway through the Fulford-Ganges Road Improvement Project — temporarily snarling traffic from Seaview to Cranberry but amazingly slated for completion next year.

We'd asked for the Wagon Wheel Housing Society's "Laundr-O-Mat" to find a home and flourish, and indeed it has — delivering a much-needed service in our community and promoting the end of single-use plastic, all through a social enterprise structure dedicated to raising funds for lower-cost housing.

Our request for earlier springtime line-painting for island roads has been met, somewhat sporadically; but it seems to be on the radar of our Local Community Commission to keep asking, so we'll tick it off our list as having landed on theirs.

And our evergreen wish for on-time, not-overloaded ferries seems to be in a better place to be fulfilled than it was five years ago — or at a minimum, it isn't getting worse, dramatic growth in traffic notwithstanding. The Quinsam may not have the upstairs lounge of the Howe Sound Queen, but it sure beats the Quinsitsa.

Sadly, nowhere in that peddler's sack have we yet found an end to Salt Spring's affordable housing shortage; as in 2019, we note promising projects on the horizon but continue to wonder whether the earnest, thoughtful efforts of our governing bodies, community organizations and ambitious individuals can hope to keep pace.

But our wishes for more kindness and understanding continue to be granted. More often than ever, islanders have stepped up to keep the charitable spirit of the holidays in their hearts and actions year 'round. Whether responding to neighbours acutely in need or working to make our community stronger, we're going to make our wish for the next five years a simple one: more of that, please.

### THE ISSUE:

Revisiting 2019 Christmas wish list

### WE SAY:

We are clearly not too naughty



## Residents part of puzzle

*Editor's note: The following is the third article in Connie Gibbs' series about Salt Spring Island family physician recruitment and retention efforts.*

### By CONNIE GIBBS

Recently another family physician on Salt Spring retired without a replacement. How to attract more family doctors to Salt Spring is a puzzle with many pieces. One piece is marked "residents."

A resident is a new graduate from medical school who has completed all the required coursework to be a doctor. Residents that choose to be family doctors must complete a two-year Family Practice Residency Program. Residents spend two months of their required two-year residency rotation learning about the practice of rural family medicine. When the residency program is complete, family doctors have many options, including working exclusively in hospitals as hospitalists or surgical assistants, providing time-away coverage for family physicians (locum coverage), or setting up a family practice in a clinic.

Here is what a recent resident had to say about her experience at the health centre clinic and in the Lady Minto Hospital emergency department:

"It was a great experience! Having accommodation for when we come up to work on Salt Spring Island is helpful. The staff are nice and incredibly competent practitioners and the medicine I saw on Salt Spring was very interesting. I would definitely consider locuming on Salt Spring Island as a new staffperson."

### VIEWPOINT

As the resident's quote shows, the Salt Spring Island doctors working with the residents are part of the recruitment puzzle.

Several of our newest and youngest doctors set up practice here on Salt Spring after serving their residency time here. Some questions residents might have in deciding where to put down roots could include:

What is the medical staff like that I will be working with? Does everyone get along? How much admin stuff do I have to handle?

What kind of space will I be working in? What's the housing situation like?

Many communities in B.C. are looking for family practice doctors. A Sept. 26, 2024 Cowichan Valley article on The Discourse website describes recruitment efforts in that community.

The community benefits when the residents come to learn about rural family medicine; they are our future. We have an opportunity to welcome them into our community professionally and socially and showcase our beautiful island.

The next article in the Salt Spring Island Physician Recruitment and Retention series will be about the Practice Ready Assessment and International Medical Graduate programs. Both programs provide an opportunity to attract new family doctors to our community.

For previous articles in this series, see *Salt Spring Island Physician Recruitment and Retention* at [gulfislandsdriftwood.com](http://gulfislandsdriftwood.com).

**"I would definitely consider locuming on Salt Spring Island as a new staffperson."**

RECENT MEDICAL SCHOOL RESIDENT

### THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION:

Will you/did you have a special meal on Christmas or Boxing Day?

☐ Yes ☐ No

### LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:

Do you agree with the decision to legislate an end to the postal strike??

32 NO 60 YES

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.

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# ISLAND VOICES

## LETTERS to the editor

### Santa and his elves save the day

In the late 1990s, I was the principal of Fulford Elementary in the south end.

One winter afternoon, at about 1:30, an unexpected storm blew in. This was more than a snowfall, it was a blizzard! Within minutes our power was gone (no phone, no water, no toilets flushing) and here we were with a couple of hundred kids and no food.

The buses attempted to get to us but the roads were impassable. We could actually watch the snow get deeper by the minute. We brought all the children into the library and closed the doors to retain heat and read stories to keep them calm but had no idea what we were going to do. A staff member volunteered to slog down to Patterson's Store through knee-deep snow to try to spread the word to the parents that we were in trouble. Remember — this was the era before cellphones and few people had a four-wheel-drive!

The afternoon was getting on, dusk would soon be upon us and panic had set into my gut, when I heard a far-off noise. The rumble grew louder and louder and louder, so I went to the back door to investigate.

There, before my eyes, appeared Santa Claus and all his elves in the form of Bruce Patterson and an army of bundled-up men. When Bruce heard the trouble we were in, he immediately went into fire chief mode. He got on his emergency radio system and rounded up every guy in Fulford with a four-wheel-drive and the rescue team arrived to save the day!

We quickly divided kids up by neighbourhood and the flotilla of elves did their runs and delivered every child home safely.

And if anyone ever asks? I tell them there truly is a Santa Claus and he has many elves. I know. I met them in real life performing their magic!

Happy Holidays, and may 2025 bring you peace, hope and contentment.

**BARB AUST,**  
SALT SPRING

### Pave paradise?

In his Dec. 11 guest column, Eric March claimed there are "no plans to double our population" or "pave paradise." While that may not be the intent, the outcome could be just that.

Here are some of the recommendations guiding the official community plan (OCP)

update: secondary suites and ADUs in all residential zones (with possible strata conversion if detached); conversion of larger acreages to bonus-density strata development in exchange for covenanted land; tiny home villages and tiny home mobile parks; additional dwellings per lot if size is restricted.

Implementation of these open-ended recommendations will require deletion of very specific growth limits in our OCP — to be replaced, no doubt, with vague, unquantified wording as in the draft Islands Trust Policy Statement: "Manage growth by directing residential and mixed-use development into appropriate locations."

And how many new densities will go to the intended people given that housing agreements are out of favour and real estate prices keep rising? Upzoning private land is not the same as creating homes for islanders.

March's assertion that there is a "strong anti-housing lobby" on the island is offensive as Trust supporters share his concerns, but want to avoid the destruction of wielding a density shotgun. If I don't like pineapple pizza, does that mean I am anti-pizza?

Housing is a highly charged issue, and it's easy to use emotive language to pro-

voke a knee-jerk reaction. But let's remember that zoning is the key to the vault and the main role of the Islands Trust is to resist the homogenizing trend sweeping the whole region.

The focus must shift to non-market housing such as co-ops, community land trusts and similar projects that guarantee long-term accommodation for target groups. Efforts should also be made to reclaim homes currently left empty or used for investment purposes. Simply calling something a "solution" does not make it thus.

**FRANTS ATTORP,**  
SALT SPRING

### Gratitude

I love recycling and it is such a delight when the young man who works at the Rainbow Road recycling depot sees me drive in and comes to carry my bucket filled with assorted recyclables, empties it and brings it back to my car.

Walking with the bucket is very difficult for me and I am extremely grateful and I give him a huge bunch of red roses. Thanks so much for your kindness.

**DIANNE PETRIE,**  
SALT SPRING

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

**"We're not saying we're selling the property. We're just accepting proposals so we can determine if it should be put up for sale, traded, swapped, donated or returned to the taxpayers."**

RODNEY DIELEMAN, SSIIPD CAO, ON EXPLORING NEW HALL OPTIONS FOR THE ISLAND'S NORTH END

## Tried-and-true gems from the Late Great Christmas Cookbook

'Tis the season, 'tisn't it? And what could make the holidays be even more festive than chowing down on some delicious nourishing grub? So loosen your belts a notch or two and get yourselves ready for some late but still great holiday recipes. Ready? Here goes.

### LAST MINUTE CHRISTMAS CAKE

All right, you should have started this two Octobers ago, but Christmas seemed so far away then. It's not too late. You can start from scratch and mix together about 40 pounds of nuts, dried fruit, butter, sugar, eggs, flour and spices (a commercial cement mixer works really well and you can toss the family pooch in at the end to lick the inside clean). We prefer to buy a few prepackaged cakes at the local supermarket, remove the cellophane wrap, soak overnight in four jiggers of good Scotch whiskey, rewrap the next morning in your own unmarked Stretch 'n Seal, and serve on Christmas Day. After two or three slices, who's gonna care?

### HOMEMADE EGG NOG

A thick blend of milk, cream, eggs and nutmeg, this holiday drink has been known to harden

arteries before you've even finished pouring it into a glass. We like to cut ours with rum so that it becomes more of a health food. Generally, everybody uses the same basic ingredients, but we have found that it's how you combine the proportions that sets our 'nog apart. We forego the milk and use straight whipping cream. (A spray can of Reddi-Wip can be used as a substitute if you are lacto-intolerant.) A block of maple fudge can be blended in for sweetening. Finally, sprinkle with a dash of nutmeg and serve chilled.

### MINCEMEAT TARTS

Just when you think that you are so bloated that you couldn't possibly stuff another piece of food in your mouth, these little suckers appear on the dinner table. Before you know it you're over the edge and bent over double talking to Ralph on the big white porcelain bowl. Mmmmmmm-mmmmm.

Basically, all you need is some pie-crust pastry and the usual suspects of dried fruit, nuts and spices for the filling. Add a little sugar, apple cider, and something called "beef suet" and you're cookin'. Now the dictionary defines suet as "the hard fat about the kidneys and



**Shilo Zylbergold**  
**NOBODY ASKED ME BUT**

loins of cattle or sheep," which is a concept too disgusting for even this food column. Don't "suet" it. We have found that a half-dozen strips of beef jerky soaked overnight in decent Scotch works just fine. Bon appetit!

### MULLED WINE

No need to mull this one over for too long. This is basically an excuse to warm your innards with an alcoholic beverage because your core temperature dropped too low as a result of your not having had the sense to come in out of the cold due to all the rum and egg nog you had previously consumed.

All you need is sugar, water, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, nutmeg, lemon peel and some really cheap Keg O' Rotgut from any local Noname Winery. If you find yourself short on ingredients, skip the water.

### TRADITIONAL WASSAIL BOWL

What do you get when you combine baked apples, sugar, spices and beaten eggs with beer and sherry? Something only the English could have thought up, but it might just be exactly what's good for "wassailin'" you. First, as is the usual British flair for all things cuisine, boil everything. Then add alcohol. It's as simple as that. Serve in a silver heatproof punch bowl (a hubcap will do in a pinch) and float roasted apples on top. If you try bobbing for the apples, make sure you invite someone with CPR training.

### BOILED FRUIT CAKE

We've got the Irish to thank for this concoction. Boil margarine and sugar in a case of Guinness Stout, and add the usual nuts, dried fruit, spices, eggs, flour and baking soda. You're supposed to bake it for a couple of hours, wrap it in tin foil, and store for a few weeks to allow it to mellow. We figure you can save a lot in tin foil expenses if you just eat the batter right away and watch yourself mellow.

### CHRISTMAS PLUM PUDDING

This one has everything but plums in it. This is one recipe that doesn't require boiling; no, you steam the sucker for four

to six hours (depending on the size of the mould) and serve hot with Spiced Hard Sauce. (Trust me, you don't want to know what this is.)

### CHRISTMAS STUFFING

Whether it's turkey, chicken, duck, quail, Cornish game hen or Tofurkey, fair is foul and foul is fare — providing you've packed the bird with stuffing. There are actual recipes for making the stuffing, but we just throw in everything that has slipped through the wire baskets in the freezer and congealed at the bottom. We're talking bread slices, beans, blackberries, old pills, expired sea monkeys and that placenta you never quite figured out what you would do with it.

Nobody asked me, but those are probably more than enough mouth-watering recipes to get you through the holiday season. When in doubt, just marinate yourself in some nuts and dried fruit with your beverage of choice and let the spirit of Christmas wash over you. Nutmeg is optional.

*Editor's note: This holiday season gem first appeared in the Dec. 21, 1999 issue of the Salt Spring Thyme newsletter.*





PHOTO BY CHRISTINE MARSHALL

J'SINTEN (Dr. John Elliott), SENĆOTEN Language Keeper, opens up ITOTELNEW HÁUTW/Tatul' utew't-hw, the new Salt Spring Library Indigenous Area, with Penelakut/Kwakwaka'wakw artist Maynard Johnny Jr.'s Capturing Light artwork in the background and some of the Indigenous book collection at right.



PHOTO BY RUSS CROUSE

A maintenance shed at Portlock Park that was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Jan. 22. Salt Spring fire crews had responded to two other structure fires the previous week, the first of several fires department members faced in 2024.

## JANUARY

- Gulf Islands property owners started the new year with new assessed property values — and they were lower, at least for most residential parcels. While not broken down by neighbourhood, the “typical” residential property in the broader Gulf Islands was assessed at \$850,000 for this year, down roughly three per cent from last year's \$874,000.

- Two Galiano Island properties recently purchased for environmental protection marked a first for one conservation group: both were acquired without a public fundraising campaign. Galiano Conservancy Association development coordinator Martine Paulin said the recent protection of 116 acres at Quadra Hill — and the addition of more than 10 further acres to the existing Mount Sutil Nature Sanctuary — were each accomplished through partnerships that had been developed over several years.

- Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue (SSIFR) firefighters dealt with two structure fires in less than two days during a brutal cold snap. The most extensive fire saw almost two dozen firefighters battle against extreme cold and high winds for six hours on the evening of Jan. 12 after responding to reports of a residential structure fire at Cusheon Place off Beddis Road. Salt Spring firefighters had also extinguished a recreational vehicle fire on private property on Aust Way the day before.

- Serious winter weather hit the Gulf Islands in the second week of January. In addition to snow, wind and temperatures measured as low as -12 Celsius on some parts of the island caused the most grief. As well, adverse weather and unsafe docking conditions resulted

in delays and cancellation of several ferry sailings. The cold snap was followed by 24 centimetres (9.5 inches) of snow in two dumps, which forced school closures.

- A bylaw meant to create a path for some Salt Spring properties to be allowed “legal” accessory dwelling units (ADUs) was read three times at one meeting and sent to the Islands Trust's Executive Committee for approval. Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee (LTC) held a special electronic meeting Monday, Jan. 22, advancing Bylaw 537 — a downsized spiritual successor to trustees' last effort on ADUs, Bylaw 530 — without a public hearing. However, the bylaw was not passed in 2024, primarily due to First Nations consultation issues.

- A maintenance shed at Portlock Park was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Jan. 22. Salt Spring Fire Chief Jamie Holmes said the structure was fully involved by the time crews arrived after a 1:46 a.m. call came in from staff at the Emcon highways yard across from the park.

- Little Rainbows Early Learning Centre opened its 1,500-square-foot infant and toddler-care facility in the new addition at the Rainbow Recreation Centre. A CRD grant-funded project years in the making, it was born from a steady four decades of work by the Gulf Islands Early Learning Society to provide child care for working families.

- Salt Spring's public library held a Jan. 28 ceremony celebrating an area dedicated specifically for Indigenous learning. The ITOTELNEW HÁUTW/Tatul' utew't-hw Indigenous Learning Area is filled with beautiful artworks, furniture and books created by Indigenous artists and authors.

- Salt Spring Island Search and Rescue Society announced full deployment of its new customized mobile incident command vehicle, following a successful fundraising campaign in 2022-2023.

## FEBRUARY

- Salt Spring's Local Community Commission (LCC) agreed to recommend renewing the designation of the Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership (SGITP) as the recipient of revenue from a short-term accommodation tax for the next five years. Starting in September, the renewed agreement will put revenues from the Municipal and Regional District Tax into the SGITP's care, with commitments toward using much of it to create affordable housing on Salt Spring Island.

- Salt Spring poultry enthusiasts worried they might run afoul of the island's decades-old noise bylaws crowded into a meeting, hoping for immediate support from LCC members, in light of a CRD noise bylaw court case related to roosters. But after hearing a delegation from the Salt Spring Island Poultry Club extolling the advantages of keeping chickens and the rural lifestyle generally, commissioners told the group the LCC had been advised by the CRD legal team to avoid all but general discussion of noise bylaw infractions, due to the legal case.

- A community effort to provide housing for teachers on Mayne Island came to fruition this month. Jackie Peterson, chair of Mayne Island School's Parent Advisory Council, said educator Marcus Down — who became the vice-principal of Mayne Island School at the beginning of the calendar year — would move in with family members as the first tenants of the Mayne Island Teacherage, mark-

ing the culmination of a months-long project that might have involved most of the island's 1,300 residents. About 30 students attend the K-7 Mayne Island School, which has faced difficulty in recent years finding — and keeping — staff.

- Gulf Islands School District (SD64) student enrolment projections were released, with a decrease expected.

“It's not good or bad news, necessarily,” said Lori Deacon, presenting to the SD64 Board of Education Feb. 14. “We are looking potentially at a decrease of about 60 to 70 [full-time equivalent, or FTE] students for next year.”

In 2023, the district showed 1,543 FTE students, according to provincial data; Deacon said they were projecting 1,445 for 2024.

- Renowned for her contributions to Canadian theatre as a set and costume designer, Salt Spring's Susan Benson attended her Order of Canada induction ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on Feb. 22, along with some 60 other inductees. Benson was first named a Member of the Order of Canada in June of 2019, but all ceremonies since then had been postponed due to the Covid pandemic.

- Salt Spring Island's largest water provider received an unexpected but welcome funding boost as the B.C. government announced its budget Thursday, Feb. 22. Tucked into documents outlining the budget and fiscal plan, and categorized under the province's response to climate emergencies, was \$10 million allocated in 2024/25 to “raise the dam height” at St. Mary Lake, to help the North Salt Spring Waterworks District (NSSWD) in efforts to both increase water storage capacity and better sustain the required environmental water flow through Duck Creek.





PHOTO COURTESY GISS IMPROV

Gulf Islands Secondary School Improv Team members celebrate a bronze medal at the 2024 Canadian Improv Games National Tournament in Ottawa in March.

## MARCH

- Salt Spring's first Level-3 electric vehicle fast-charging station was confirmed, as officials signed off on an agreement that will see the service installed concurrent with construction of the island's new fire hall. Trustees for the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District directed staff to sign a 10-year lease with BC Hydro for the spot, with a planned renewal for another 10 years after that.

- With funding for outreach and designs allocated — and a consulting firm retained — Salt Spring's new Ganges Harbourwalk Steering Committee hit the ground running at its first meeting, as regional district staff laid out history and two different paths for a project revitalizing the waterfront. Current harbourwalk infrastructure dates back to its installation in the 1980s, explained the CRD's Dan Ovington, a collaborative initiative involving multiple public agencies and community volunteers. But the legal instruments required to guarantee public access along the entirety of the route — known as statutory rights of way — were not secured at the time of the original construction. As a result, there are gaps in the harbourwalk — and some segments have fallen into disrepair.

- Permits were issued for a targeted spraying effort in April that officials hoped would keep an invasive species of moth from establishing a foothold on Salt Spring Island. B.C.'s Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy had issued two pesticide use permits authorizing the spraying over 13 locations in the province — including a swath centred on Elizabeth Drive on Salt Spring.

- Salt Spring's largest population centre

is highly vulnerable to future extreme heat events, according to a new regional mapping project that put Ganges near the top of a grim list. A report from the CRD's Climate Action Program highlighted a new map, built partly from ground-level data collected during the 2021 heat dome event.

- The Gulf Islands Secondary School Improv Team earned third place in national competition at the Canadian Improv Games in Ottawa at the end of March, under coach Jason Donaldson. It was the eighth time the GISS team has qualified for national competition.

- The Saturday Market season opened March 30 in the upgraded Centennial Park plaza area, which saw a fresh cement surface, lighting and landscaping work completed over the winter months. Also new was the market being run by the non-profit Salt Spring Island Saturday Market Society, rather than the CRD, which owns and maintains the park.

## APRIL

- B.C. government officials poured cold water on a suggested legislative change that might have improved borrowing options for Salt Spring's largest improvement district, telling the NSSVD the province won't consider amending the Local Government Act in ways that would allow access to preferential interest rates to reduce costs for ratepayers funding major infrastructure projects.

- An April 11 Salt Spring LTC meeting heard that a Vesuvius property with a storied history may return to the tourist accommodation game despite residential zoning — although potential offerings may look different from



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Performing at one of two sold-out concerts headlined by the Jim Cuddy Band on April 19 as part of the 25th Anniversary Festival at ArtSpring are, from left, Anne Lindsay, Jim Cuddy, Salome Cullen (Salt Spring musician and opening act lead) and Colin Cripps.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Participating in Salt Spring's Volunteer Fair at Salt Spring Island Multi Space on April 13 are, from left, Victoria Skinner, Willie MacPherson, Jai Wilson and David Norget of the Mental Wellness Initiative.

the hotel and pub long-time islanders might remember. Trustees approved a two-year temporary use permit for the operation of five commercial guest units — specifically, individual geodesic dome/yurt structures elevated on wooden platforms — on the same property as the former Vesuvius Inn, itself now a private residence. Owner Travis Heide told trustees the plan was to test the market with five units, although there have been conceptual drawings submitted showing as many as 15 temporary camping domes.

- A long-languishing supportive housing project on Salt Spring Island had a new timeline, would help more people than previously planned and would include new units of affordable housing. Among what is now 36 total units planned for BC Housing's project at 161 Drake Rd., 32 will be supportive housing — and four will be "affordable rental housing for low- to moderate-income residents," according to a letter published in a CRD Hospitals and Housing Committee agenda package.



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PHOTO BY MARY KASTLE/SSI FOUNDATION

Salt Spring Island Foundation (SSIF) chair Walter Stewart, left, presents a \$100,000 donation from the SSIF Land Protection Fund for development of the new Mount Maxwell (Hwmet'utsum) Community Park to parks and rec manager Dan Ovington and Local Community Commission members Gayle Baker, Brian Webster and Gary Holman.

## APRIL continued

- ArtSpring celebrated its 25th anniversary in style with an April 17-21 festival that saw two sold-out concerts with Canadian music legend Jim Cuddy and his band, plus near-non-stop entertainment, workshops, open stages, shared food and forums.

- The sound of heavy equipment at work marked the beginning of construction at the future site of Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue's new fire hall, where excavation and site service work started April 22. Local company Charlie's Excavating was the successful bidder for the site's civil works, which include levelling, drainage, water and sewer hookups, electrical conduits and creating the parking lots. MKM Projects of Qualicum is the construction management company. The \$12.5-million hall at 455 Lower Ganges Rd. is expected to be ready for firefighters and administrative staff before the end of 2026.

- The Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District (SSIFPD) trustee election saw incumbent Rob Oliver and newcomer Dennis Lucarelli receive the most votes for a three-year term. Of a total 1,815 ballots completed, Oliver received 1,423, Lucarelli 1,356, and Jenny McClean 529, according to returning officer Anthony Kennedy, who added that 45 ballots were spoiled.

## MAY

- Salt Spring's Search and Rescue group raised concerns about the state of historically rough Mount Maxwell Road, which they said was getting worse, making it more difficult

to rescue people lost or in danger in the provincial park and environs. But the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) said, "Given the challenging natural terrain and its location on an ecological reserve, there are no current plans to upgrade the road."

- Two Salt Spring Island residents were among only 20 Community Award recipients named by the BC Achievement Foundation this year. Doreen and Wayne Hewitt were recognized for their active roles in championing water protection on Salt Spring Island for more than 30 years.

- David Courtney and Brian Pyper were elected to serve three-year terms on the NSSVD board of trustees. The results were announced by CAO Mark Boysen to about a dozen attendees at NSSVD's annual general meeting held May 2 at Community Gospel Chapel. The meeting was the last for outgoing trustee Chris Dixon, who had announced earlier in the year he would not be running for a third term.

- B.C.'s Ministry of Forests began targeted aerial spraying of the bacteria-based insecticide Foray 48B over a 48-hectare area centred on Elizabeth Drive on Salt Spring on May 6. A number of island residents expressed concerns about weather conditions on that date, other alleged violations of the permit and decrised use of the insecticide at all.

- Late-night skywatchers were rewarded big-time as an historic category G5 geomagnetic storm resulted in stunning Aurora borealis light shows across the region late in the evening of May 10.



PHOTO BY ALAN BIBBY

Aurora borealis seen in the sky over Vesuvius Bay and the north end of Salt Spring in a photo taken late in the evening on May 10 from the summit of Mount Erskine. The historic geomagnetic storm resulted from a 200,000-km-wide sunspot and the "northern lights" were seen in many regions where the phenomenon is rarely, if ever, encountered.

- Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue personnel extinguished an RV and shed fire in the 300 block of West Eagle Drive on May 11. Water was supplied to the scene using a tender shuttle operation that fire department members train on regularly. Fifteen firefighters were on scene with no reported injuries.

- BC Ferries announced several new webcams put online with near-live images of vehicle staging areas at terminals serving Salt Spring Island and other communities served. Among the 30 new cameras offering real-time views were those facing the Fulford Harbour, Long Harbour and Vesuvius Bay vehicle staging areas — and notably, one in Crofton, so islanders can see the line-up on Chaplin Street.

- A new cancel stamp was in use at the Ganges Post Office, attracting interest from philatelists across the globe. It was designed by local wildlife artist W. Allan Hancock, known for his work featured on gold and silver coins from the Royal Canadian Mint.

- Salt Spring Island Public Library was recognized for its Truth and Reconciliation work through a British Columbia Library Association award. The award goes to an organization responsible for increasing the relevancy and impact of library services through partnership, collaboration and building trust where little had previously existed.

- The 39th annual Salt Spring Challenge Cup soccer tourney included a thrilling all-Salt Spring Men's Competitive division final that saw AFC Gauntlet beat Sons of Pitches 2-1 at the GISS field. Other Salt Spring winners were

A Dash of Salt in the Women's Comp division and We Dem Boyz in the Men's Rec group.

- More than 100 sailboats participated in the 49th annual Round Salt Spring Race, joining either the traditional full round-the-island event or a new shorter day race. The first boats completed the race in about seven hours. Wave Reviews from the Canadian Forces Sailing Association was the overall winner, earning the Marshall Sharp Trophy.

- David Fullbrook, proponent of the Ocean Estuary development — once known as the Vortex — at Fulford, announced plans for the project to draw and treat its own water after what he called "impossible" requests made by Fulford Water Service commissioners at a May 24 meeting. The project, a commercial and retail development with 17 planned motel units within eight cottage buildings, a restaurant and accessory retail sales buildings all centred on an outdoor plaza, received approval for a development permit from Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee in early 2023.

- A first pass at considering amendments to the Islands Trust Policy Statement got off to a rocky start on May 30 as Islands Trust Council held its first-ever Committee of the Whole meeting. A nearly complete roster of trustees spent three hours on the project, which was punctuated by fundamental disagreements, particularly around the Islands Trust's "object," or the so-called Section 3 "preserve and protect" mandate. Trustees continued to debate whether or not they had truly reached a consensus on interpretation of that mandate during a closed meeting held the previous September.

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## JUNE

• Personal protective equipment made but not used on Salt Spring Island during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had found a new home in Ukraine. Bruce Brown and Bob Beckett of the Vancouver Island Supports Ukraine group came to the island to pick up several containers of isolation gowns and protective face shields made by community members.

• A group of Salt Spring Tennis Association volunteers spent three hot days restoring courts 2 and 3 at Portlock Park to ensure safe summer play this year. Materials were supplied by the CRD's parks department, with a case of bottled water donated for thirsty workers by Country Grocer.

• Churchill Beach was declared unsafe for swimming after a June 4 water sample taken there showed a high level of enterococci bacteria, 85 per 100 mL, up from less than five per 100 mL found there May 22. The unusually high reading would prove to be fleeting, with levels returning to normal during subsequent testing.

• As protesters gathered outside a meeting held on Salt Spring at the Harbour House Hotel, elected officials serving on Islands Trust Council (ITC) struggled with what one trustee called its status as a "structurally unsound organization." And for a topic not technically on the agenda, Section 3 of the Islands Trust Act — commonly called the "preserve and protect" mandate in the Trust's foundational authority — used up an outsized amount of the parliamentary oxygen in the room during the June 18-20 meeting.

• The first Indigenous Peoples Weekend unfolded on Salt Spring from June 21-23, with numerous events focusing on arts and culture, food, environment, reconciliation and community. One event saw Elders from five of the 14 First Nations whose territory includes Salt Spring Island participate in a 10-year anniversary event to celebrate the success of protests around protecting Grace Islet.

• A \$75,000 grant from Mid Island Co-op's Community Spaces program would benefit new Harvest Community Gardens being developed by Island Community Services (ICS) at their 10.85-acre Brinkworthy Road property, which ICS announced it had purchased in April 2023.

• Saanich North and the Islands MLA Adam Olsen stunned colleagues and constituents by announcing on June 25 he would not be on the ballot for the fall provincial election.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

John Dolman, left, and Tim O'Connor of TJ Beans Cafe were among celebrants at the Salt Spring Pride Festival held July 25-28.

The two-term BC Green Party MLA, 48, said he had been greatly impacted by the tragic deaths in the past calendar year of three men, younger than himself, who all had children that would not know their fathers.

• Salt Spring officials approved first steps toward growing and electrifying the island's transit fleet, narrowly voting to advance plans for a bus depot — alongside an integrated facility for parks maintenance staff — on Kanaka Road. In a 3-2 vote, the island's LCC directed staff to submit a request to the Islands Trust for a relevant bylaw amendment for the land at 210 and 220 Kanaka Road, which abuts the western edge of the Gulf Islands Secondary School property. LCC member Brian Webster, who along with Gayle Baker voted against the proposal, had wanted to retain the larger 0.76-acre 210 Kanaka property for a housing project and put off bus depot plans, utilizing the smaller 0.46-acre parcel for the new parks staff facility.

## JULY

• The 33rd annual Lady Minto Hospital Foundation (LMHF) golf tournament was the most successful fundraising event to date, with some 120 golfers raising more than \$50,000, which was well above its initial \$35,000 goal. Funds would be used for a crash cart for the new hospital emergency department.

• The CRD announced that it had purchased 10 acres on Galiano Island that would pave the way for 20 units of affordable rental hous-



PHOTO COURTESY ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY

During a July 12 celebration, representatives of Royal Roads University (RRU), the Bloom Canadian Alter Ego Trust 2020 and Salt Spring partner groups applaud the unveiling of the Bloom Castle by-the-Sea site gifted to RRU by the late Susan Bloom.



PHOTO BY GAIL SIJBERG

A June 18 gathering of about 50 people outside the Harbour House Hotel where Islands Trust Council was holding its quarterly meeting pressed trustees from 13 islands in the federation to uphold the original "preserve and protect" mandate of the Trust, which they said had been subject to varying interpretations in the previous 10 months.

ing. The parcel, formerly known as "Galiano Green," assessed at \$672,000 in 2023, would advance what is now called the Thuthiqut Hulelum' Housing Project — "Forest Homes" in the Hul'q'umi'num' language.

• The Salt Spring Skatepark Society made public its plans to expand the 20-year-old Kanaka Road Skatepark, at an estimated cost of \$350,000, when it sought the blessing of LCC members.

• Royal Roads University (RRU) announced that it had received the largest single donation in its history from a Salt Spring resident's estate. The Bloom Canadian Alter Ego Trust 2020 gifted the late Susan Bagley Bloom's oceanfront Beddis Beach property, home, gardens and historic orchard to RRU, along with funds and a significant endowment, with a total value of \$9.93 million. A celebration at the site took place on July 12. The Salt

Spring Island Farmland Trust and Salt Spring Island Conservancy would also be partners as stewards of the heritage orchard.

• Salt Spring Islanders were remembering their friends Brett Clibbery and Sarah Packwood. Police in Nova Scotia said July 12 that two bodies were discovered in what they believed was the lifeboat for the 42-foot Gib'sea sailing vessel Theros, which had been reported missing since June 18, one week after the couple left Halifax Harbour June 11 en route to the Azores.

• Treasure Fair, ArtSpring's largest annual fundraiser, smashed its own record from 2023 with proceeds of more than \$125,000 being raised in the online auction held from July 10 to 13. Success was due in large measure to the \$56,000 purchase by a Sidney resident of a donated 1957 Porsche 365 Speedster replica within 17 minutes of the event's opening.



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## JULY continued

• The Islands Trust was moving forward with developing a protocol agreement with Quw'utsun (Cowichan) Nation, representing perhaps the most significant and collaborative effort yet by trustees hoping to fulfill commitments made through its 2019 Reconciliation Action Plan.

• Work was underway at 161 Drake Rd., where contractors were preparing the site to receive a special delivery in early 2025: three dozen new housing units for Salt Spring Island, according to BC Housing, which is making the project happen on land leased from the CRD.

• A firestorm of controversy related to the Israel-Gaza war erupted after Sofya Raginsky of Heyday Farm refused to remove a handwritten "Stop Genocide, Free Palestine" sign at the back of her Saturday Market stall when asked to do so and then after a new restrictive signage guideline was announced by the Salt Spring Island Saturday Market Society board. Some people had reported feeling uncomfortable or unsafe because of the sign's presence. As of the end of the market season, the proposed guideline change was not implemented.

• Two Salt Spring junior sailing teams brought home silver medals from the July 18 to 21 BC Summer Games. Izzi Pugh Aucoin and Reuben Sol captured silver in the C420 Open category (mixed and male teams), while Malikaa Clement and Maeve FitzZaland won silver in the C420 Female category. BC Summer Games wins were just part of a successful season for the island's young sailors.

## AUGUST

• A new Neighbours Feeding Neighbours initiative of the Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust aimed to flesh out an understanding of how Salt Spring's food resources could be leveraged in an emergency, geographically organized — at least for now — through the extant Salt Spring Island Emergency Program neighbourhood pod system that covers the entire island.

• Fire crews from two Salt Spring stations fought a hay field blaze at Church Hill Farm on North End Road for three hours on Aug. 3, highlighting what island officials called "match-stick" dry conditions that persisted despite a brief period of rainfall the previous week.

• Unexpected understaffing and lack of enrolment resulted in the closure of Salt Spring Centre School after 41 years of operation. A Centre Schoolhouse Learning Group was established for a small group of young students.

• SSIFR crew members were tasked at 12:33 a.m. on Aug. 18 — in the midst of a major thunder and lightning storm — to respond to a report of a Wright Road structure fire. A strong smell of smoke was detected on the main floor, according to SSIFR Capt. Warren Nuyens, and smoke was seen coming out of the crawlspace vents.

• A Salt Spring Island resident who was disqualified from the BC Green Party candidate nomination race in the Saanich North and the Islands (SNI) riding was demanding she be reinstated on the ballot and another vote held. Amy Haysom was one of three individuals nominated to run for the Greens in SNI position in this fall's provincial election, and said her name was removed from the party ballot less than an hour before voting began on Aug. 2, "with the party citing unspecified complaints" having been received about her. Robert Botterrell of Pender Island was ultimately named the SNI candidate after receiving more votes from local riding Green Party members than North Saanich resident Stuart MacKinnon.

• B.C. Provincial Court Judge Christine Lowe found Salt Spring rooster owner Clinton McNichol guilty on five counts of violating a CRD bylaw related to livestock and noise, and fined him \$750 per offence in Aug. 30 sentencing. McNichol had been charged with keeping livestock — one to three roosters — on his 0.92-acre Woodland Drive property, contrary to a CRD bylaw requiring animals be kept in a manner that does not disturb the "quiet, peace, rest, enjoyment, comfort or convenience of other property owners in the vicinity." The case created major community controversy, with island farmers concerned the case would set a precedent that would impact other farm operations.

• Salt Spring Islander Chris Rowthorn, 58, gave himself a challenge by swimming across Stuart Channel between Vesuvius Beach and Osborne Bay Regional Park in 90 minutes on the morning of Aug. 24.

• Salt Spring Island increased its rowing sport profile when it hosted an exciting Race Around the Rock Coastal Endurance Regatta on Aug. 25. According to organizing committee chair Zoë Clarke, the regatta saw 61 participants from eight rowing clubs row all the way around Salt Spring Island — a total of 88 kilometres — with both quads and doubles hitting the water.

• The NSSWD announced Aug. 29 it was gradually easing its 10-year moratorium on water hook-ups on the Maxwell Lake side of its system only, allowing for the potential of 300 multi-family dwelling connections. The decision was made based on results of a new supply reliability assessment.



PHOTO COURTESY SS JUNIOR SAILING TEAM

Sporting silver medals earned in BC Summer Games sailing competition in Maple Ridge in July are, from left, Salt Spring sailors Reuben Sol, Izzi Pugh Aucoin, Maeve FitzZaland and Malikaa Clement.



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Excavator begins work on the \$22.9-million Ganges Hill road improvement project in September. While some residents were at first alarmed by the resulting traffic delays, they seemed to adapt as time passed.

## SEPTEMBER

• Victoria-based Northridge Excavating Ltd. began construction on a major road improvement project that will see the resurfacing and widening of 1.6 kilometres of Fulford-Ganges Road between the intersection with Seaview Avenue and Cranberry Road, with shoulders for cyclists and pedestrians added. Cost of the project was pegged at \$22.9 million, paid for by the provincial government, including funds for property owner compensation. Roadwork resulted in travel delays due to the need for one-way traffic in construction zones Monday through Friday. Anticipated completion date is November 2025.

• The Islands Trust announced it had found a new home in the recently vacated Apple Photo space at 121 McPhillips Ave. in the Creekside building near the main CRD administration office, although extensive renovations required meant Salt Spring staff would not be relocating there in the near future. The current office space leased from BC Hydro was vacated Oct. 18, with staff working remotely from that point on.

# Looking ahead to 2025.



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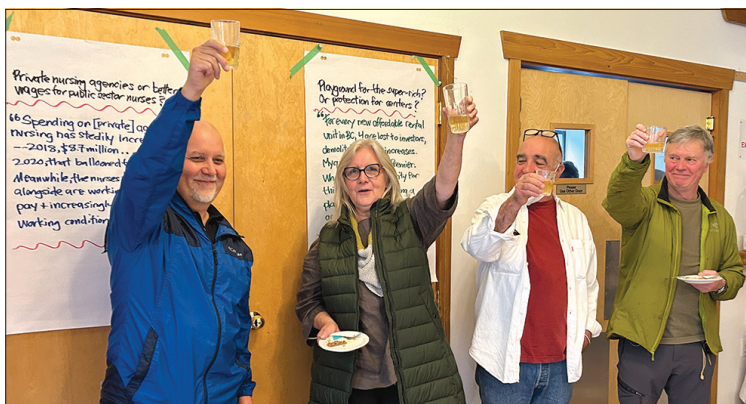


PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Saanich North and the Islands Green party MLA Adam Olsen, left, joins the toast to himself during a tribute event at Lions Hall on Sept. 13, joined by his mother Sylvia Olsen and Green party members Alvaro Sanchez and Brian Smallshaw.

## SEPTEMBER continued

- Lions Hall was packed on Sept. 13 for a thank-you and good-bye tribute party for Saanich North and the Islands Green MLA Adam Olsen, who had announced in June that he would not seek a third term. Guest speakers included MP Elizabeth May, Olsen's mother Sylvia Olsen, plus local politicians and supporters, including Bill Henderson performing two songs.

- Salt Spring Islander Maxwell Kaye represented Team Canada at the World Skate Games in Italy, competing in the Street Luge World Championships in Torontoro. Kaye had recently organized the 13th annual Salt Spring Slasher downhill skateboard event, which saw dozens of longboard skaters tackle the hill at Juniper Place over the Aug. 24-25 weekend.

- Many on Salt Spring Island were jolted awake by a small earthquake in the early morning hours of Sept. 26. Earthquakes Canada said the shaking just after 4 a.m. measured magnitude 3.8 and was centred beneath the ocean east of Saanichton. No damage was reported.

- The third and final Transition Salt Spring Repair Cafe of 2024, held on Sept. 21 in the printmakers' room at the Salt Spring Island Multi Space (SIMS), saw more than 100 islanders bring in all manner of treasures in need of repair, and 21 volunteer fixers on hand over the three-hour period.

- A spike in pertussis cases — also known as whooping cough — within the Island Health region prompted a reminder

from public health officials that the disease is among those largely preventable through up-to-date vaccinations. Island Health reported that 17 people had been ill from pertussis within its health area since August, adding that the disease was "currently circulating."

## OCTOBER

- Salt Spring Island's new emergency department opened at Lady Minto Hospital without fanfare on Oct. 9. The now-complete \$13.6-million project — funded with more than \$8 million raised by the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation — includes a 420-square-metre building addition, bringing the total building size to 2,728 square metres. More than 600 individual donors contributed to the effort to upgrade the current facility — in use since 1958.

- Acknowledging a "democracy deficit" and obstacles to meaningful reconciliation with First Nations, Islands Trust Council decided to once again entreat the government of B.C. for a legislative review. A letter requested a review of the "mandate, governance and structure" of the Islands Trust, via a letter spanning a range of issues it says need updates or clarification — from authority over marine areas and funding models to the Section 3 "mandate," proportional representation for residents and a decision-making process that includes the 27 Indigenous governing bodies with interests in the Trust area. Nearly all trustees had voted in favour of requesting a review, although many apparently felt the timing wasn't right.

- A popular Salt Spring Island trail was closed to the public for more than three weeks beginning Oct. 11 after reports of aggressive off-leash dogs brought bylaw, BC Parks and RCMP officers to Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park's Daffodil Point trail. CRD staff explained the closure was related to a pack of at least five dogs seen running at large in the area.

- Haan Palcu-Chang's jump to the small screen had Salt Spring Island's food lovers cheering at their televisions, as the local chef was appearing on the latest season of Food Network's Top Chef Canada. The Toronto-born Taiwanese-Romanian chef said he brought his best effort to the program, which saw him win several critical challenges in the competition, advancing to the season finale and finishing in third place.

- Mayne Island celebrated completion of a \$4.5-million pathway linking Miners Bay and the Village Bay ferry terminal on Oct. 16. Two years of construction resulted in a 2.3-kilometre, two-way, gravel-surfaced trail for pedestrians and bicycles.

- Saanich North and the Islands (SNI) voters chose a Green candidate for the third straight provincial election, as Rob Botterell of Pender Island got the nod from the electorate on Oct. 19. Final SNI results were: Rob Botterell, Green: 12,308 votes (36.15 per cent); Sarah Riddell, NDP: 10,958 votes (32.19 per cent); David Busch, Conservative: 10,145 votes (29.8 per cent); Amy Haysom, independent: 635 votes (1.87 per cent). Province-wide the race was extremely close, with recounts needed to give the incumbent NDP government the



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

New entrance to Lady Minto Hospital and a seriously upgraded emergency department to the left, which opened on Oct. 9. The \$13.9-million project saw major support from the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation, along with CRD and Island Health contributions.

slimmest of margins with 47 seats to the Conservatives' 44 and the Greens' two.

- An erosion protection plan for homes fronting Baker Beach was drawing skepticism from some islanders and prompted a Change.org petition that had more than 1,200 signatures by year's end. Comments were being accepted until Nov. 13 with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, which is considering an application to modify a 560-metre strip of provincial Crown land fronting six Booth Bay waterfront parcels between Quarry Drive and Baker Road.

- Salt Spring RCMP reported that a man struck by a vehicle on Rainbow Road on Oct. 28 died in hospital in Victoria the following day. Sgt. Clive Seabrook said the driver had remained at the scene, had cooperated with investigators and no criminal charges were forthcoming. Members of Bruce Twentyman's family were raising funds via the GoFundMe platform to complete funeral arrangements.

- Citing a "respect for safe workplace concerns," Islands Trust staff were directed by the Trust's Executive Committee (EC) to remove recordings of the September Trust Council meeting from the body's official website — and to fast-track plans for a trustee education session on meeting conduct. EC members spent much of the Oct. 30 meeting discussing an approach to a growing incivility noted in meetings, pointing to the September ITC meeting as particularly onerous — if not necessarily unique — and pondering plans to revisit a code of conduct discussion before the next meeting slated for December.



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PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Marking the start of construction of the new Windsor Plywood building on Rainbow Road at a Nov. 1 event are, from left, ownership group members Jessica Harkema, Mike Stefancsik and Adam Geddes.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Former Alberta Premier Rachel Notley receives her honorary membership in the Salt Spring Unicorn Riders Association from Tom Mitchell, left, and Bob Mackie, at a Nov. 16 Salt Spring Forum event.



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Community members applaud as Salt Spring Island Foundation chair Walter Stewart announces that the foundation's endowment is expected to reach \$21 million by the end of 2025, while also noting other 40th anniversary highlights.

## NOVEMBER

- Windsor Plywood held a celebration to break ground for its new building on Rainbow Road. The business had been operating from temporary structures since an overnight fire destroyed the main building on June 1, 2021. At the event, company reps thanked the fire department for containing the fire, staff for their hard work, other businesses for support and customers for their loyalty since that date. The new building will have 15,000 square feet of retail space, including offices and storage, plus a 3,000-square-foot warehouse.

- The Salt Spring and Southern Gulf Islands Community Services Society — AKA Island Community Services — held its annual general meeting in a crowded Zoom room on Nov. 14, but allowed only its seven members — including its five board members — to speak, in addition to staff. The non-profit society had received many applications for membership following calls for people to join the society. Those calls came in response to concerns expressed by a spectrum of community members and former MLA Adam Olsen during the fall. However, the board stated it would not be accepting any new members until it had time to determine a process for doing so.

- After a year of negotiations failed to produce an agreement, some 55,000 postal workers represented by the Canadian

Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) went on strike across the country on Nov. 15, bringing mail delivery operations to a halt until being ordered back to work by the federal government's Canada Industrial Relations Board on Dec. 17.

- The Salt Spring Island Foundation marked four decades of giving with a huge community gathering at ArtSpring on Nov. 16, honouring the group's founders and showcasing the impacts of some \$5.9 million provided to island charities over the years.

- Citing both financial pressures and declining enrolment, the Gulf Islands Board of Education voted Nov. 13 to end its Gulf Islands International Program after 25 years of bringing international students to Salt Spring's Gulf Islands Secondary School, effective June 30, 2025.

- After four rounds of public feedback, months of staff and stakeholder workshops, hundreds of survey responses and countless trips back to the drawing board, Salt Spring's LCC unanimously approved the draft Portlock Park Site Master Plan, concurrently revising the existing Rainbow Recreation Centre Site Master Plan and outlining the basic configuration for both properties going into the future. The plan sees a senior-sized baseball field for youth created at Portlock, with an oval track maintained, and relocation of tennis and pickleball courts to the Rainbow Road site.

- Ferry advisory committee (FAC) members in 13 BC Ferries communities were taken by surprise during a Nov. 25 conference call when they were advised that the all-volunteer FACs would be "retired" by the end of April 2025. The ferry corporation said it would be moving to an online approach to gathering public input.

- Reports of flames and an explosion sent crews from all three Salt Spring fire stations to an early morning blaze that destroyed a cabin, according to fire officials. No one was injured, according to Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue Deputy Fire Chief Dale Lundy, but the roughly 600-square-foot structure on Fulford-Ganges Road near Blackburn Lake was completely consumed by fire early Nov. 27.

- Salt Spring and Sooke RCMP detachments reported that one individual stole a truck from a Blackburn Road residence on Salt Spring Island on Nov. 27, escaped from the island with it, and was then apprehended after stealing a Winnebago trailer near Sooke on Nov. 30. The suspect is a 40-year-old man of no fixed address, who was subsequently released from custody, but then reportedly arrested for further alleged crimes in the Victoria area.

## DECEMBER

- Salt Spring Islanders stepped up to assist their neighbours after an extended power outage caused by a powerful storm on Nov. 19 led to a devastating

loss of food stores on nearby Penelakut Island. Food and fund collection events were held at both Country Grocer and Thrifty Foods on Dec. 7 and a GoFundMe site was also set up. The effort saw more than \$40,000 raised at the day-14 mark of the fundraiser.

- Salt Spring Island Public Library made the move to be officially fire-free as of Dec. 1, joining other regional libraries, in order to reduce barriers to its services.

- A spike in the region's cost of living pushed the "living wage" to \$26.25 per hour, according to Salt Spring's 2024 Living Wage report from the Salt Spring Island Foundation — a 7.75 per cent increase from 2022 mostly driven by housing costs. The 2024 report is the latest from the foundation, which periodically crunches the numbers in cooperation with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Living Wage BC. In 2022, the figure was \$24.36 and in 2018 it was \$20.95.

- Salt Spring's LCC wrapped up 2024 with one last grant award at its Dec. 5 meeting, giving \$2,068 to the Chuan Society to open a new community drop-in space called the Hearth, to be open daily from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the former Phoenix Elementary School property's portable classroom on Drake Road. That property is now being leased by the Capital Regional District, who in turn will book use by Chuan.

# CELEBRATING THE PAST, INSPIRED FOR THE FUTURE

# 2024 2025

## — THANK YOU FOR AN AMAZING YEAR!



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# ISLAND LIFE

## FRIENDLY FOLKS AT FULFORD HALL



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Helga and Michael Bagnell at this year's Fulford Hall craft fair. The couple will welcome the community back to the hall on Christmas Day for the annual Fulford Hall Christmas Free-be-do. Everyone is invited to enjoy food, fellowship, music, gifts for kids and more from 10 a.m. on.



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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE  
**Gulf Islands Driftwood** office will be  
closed on Wed.-Thurs., Dec. 25-26 &  
Wed., Jan. 1

Call us at 250-537-9933 for  
advertising and editorial deadlines  
for the Jan. 1 issue, which goes to  
press earlier than usual.

Happy Holidays!

**Driftwood**

**COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER**  
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will be published  
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## ASK THE EXPERT

### HOW CAN I AVOID OVERSPENDING DURING THE HOLIDAYS?

The pressure to give the perfect gift drives many people to blow their holiday budget. Here are a few ways that you can make this a season of giving without overspending.

**GABE GOLD**  
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### AVOID TEMPTATIONS

There's nothing wrong with buying something special for yourself, but don't let it derail your holiday budget. Also, shopping at the last minute generally results in overspending. Something that seems like a good deal on December 23 probably isn't.

### MAKE YOUR LIST AND CHECK IT TWICE

An important part of sticking to your budget is having a plan and sticking to it. Make a list of everyone you want to buy gifts for, add up what you can realistically spend without going into debt and then divvy up your budget based on how much you want to spend on each.

### FACTOR IN ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

If you're basing your holiday budget solely on gifts, you may be missing expenses. Are you having a virtual dinner with family and friends? You'll be buying food. Did you order new decorations for your home? That counts as holiday spending.

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## BACK TO THE FEZZIWIG BALL



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Mesmerized by entertainment at the Fezziwig Ball in a scene from Christmas With Scrooge are, from left, Ghost of Christmas Past (played by Rowan Algoet), Scrooge (Kevin Wilkie), ball guest (Susannah Devitt) and Belle Merriweather (Metta Rose). The Newman Family Productions run of eight shows concluded at Fulford Hall on Saturday, Dec. 21.



# Firstborn of 2025

We can't wait to see who will be the first baby of the New Year!



**Congratulations to the family of Salt Spring's first baby of 2025!**  
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A huge "thank you" to these community businesses who are set to shower the first baby of 2025 with generous gifts. West of the Moon, Pharmasave, Salt Spring Books & Old Salty.



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## TIDE TABLES

at Fulford Harbour

DECEMBER - JANUARY PST (UTC-8H)

When using Daylight Saving Time, one hour must be added to the predicted time in the table

DAY	TIME	FEET	METRES	DAY	TIME	FEET	METRES
25	3:27	8.4	2.56	29	6:12	10.9	3.35
	5:37	8.3	2.53		10:30	10	3.05
	11:50	10.2	3.05		12:45	10.1	3.02
	19:52	3.7	1.13		21:54	1	0.31
26	4:34	9.3	2.83	30	6:40	11.1	3.41
	7:12	9.2	2.77		11:13	9.9	2.96
	11:56	10.1	3.02		13:27	10.1	3.02
	20:21	2.8	0.86		22:29	0.7	0.21
27	5:13	10.1	3.08	31	7:09	11.2	3.44
	8:33	9.7	2.96		11:56	9.8	2.99
	12:00	10.1	3.02		14:18	10	3.05
	20:51	2.1	0.64		23:07	0.4	0.12
28	5:43	10.6	3.25	1 JAN	7:39	11.4	3.48
	9:38	9.9	3.02		12:41	9.6	2.93
	12:15	10.1	3.02		15:19	9.9	3.02
	21:21	1.5	0.46		23:46	0.6	0.18

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# what's on this week

Wed. Dec. 25

### ACTIVITIES

**Christmas Day Free-be-do.** All welcome for family-friendly Christmas celebration at Fulford Hall. Gifts for kids, food, live music and fellowship. From 10 a.m. on.

**Festival of Trees.** Bring donations for the food bank and put under your favourite decorated tree. Harbour House Hotel. Daily through Jan. 1.

Thur. Dec. 26

### LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

**Boxing Day – The Tradition.** Something Else DJs playing vinyl through dinner at 6 p.m. and moving into The Anthems Band from Victoria at 9 p.m. Moby's Pub.

**Open Mic.** With Rough & Tumble at the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

### ACTIVITIES

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing.

**Boxing Day Reunion Open House** at the Legion. Starts at 1 p.m. Free pool.

Fri. Dec. 27

### LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

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

**DJ Boomtown.** Moby's Pub. 9 p.m.

### ACTIVITIES

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing.

Sat. Dec. 28

### LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

**Rough & Tumble.** Legion. 8 to 11 p.m.

**Everyday People.** Salt Spring's favourite cover band. Moby's Pub. 9 p.m.

### ACTIVITIES

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing.

Sun. Dec. 29

### LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

**Blues Jam.** Legion. 3 to 6 p.m.

### ACTIVITIES

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing.

Mon. Dec. 30

### ACTIVITIES

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing.

Tues. Dec. 31

### LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

**New Year's at Feast.** Live music, donuts for the kids, free bubbly and more at Feast. 5 p.m. to midnight.

**New Year's Eve at the Legion.** Newfie New Year with Valdy from 6 to 7:30 p.m., followed by Local Motion from 8 p.m. to midnight.

**New Year's Eve With Woodland Band.** Moby's Pub. 7 p.m.

### ACTIVITIES

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing.

Wed. Jan. 1

### ACTIVITIES

**Polar Bear Swim.** Vesuvius Beach. Noon.

**Festival of Trees.** See Wednesday listing. Winner is determined on the morning of Thursday, Jan. 2.

### EXHIBITIONS

• **16th Annual Christmas Exhibition of Small Works,** featuring all Gallery 8 artists, runs daily through Dec. 31.

• **Different Perspectives: Photographs by John de Bruyn and Stephen Morris** is the library program room exhibit until Dec. 29.

• **Artcraft Winter** — the Salt Spring Arts show and sale of work by Gulf Islands artisans — runs at Mahon Hall daily through Dec. 24.

• **Michael Wall** has a new set — the eighth — in his continuing series of Italian Photographs on display at Pasta Fresca.

• **Laurel Lemchuk-Favel** is showing her paintings at the Country Grocer Cafe for the month of December.

**Festival of Trees**  
Bring donations for the Food Bank and Copper Kettle to the Harbour House Hotel. Daily through Jan. 1

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Every year, the festive season is sadly overshadowed by car accidents that could have been avoided. A large percentage of collisions involve drivers who have been drinking over the legal limit or taking drugs.

### BE PREPARED

It's widely known that drugs and alcohol impair your judgment. Despite this reality, some individuals who've consumed these substances may believe they're fit to drive when actually they're not. In short, if you've had any amount of alcohol or smoked or ingested cannabis, it's not safe to rely on your own judgment.

### PLAN AHEAD!

No one wants to be part of another statistic or have someone's death on their conscience for the rest of their life. In 2023, there are no excuses for driving under the influence. You have plenty of choices to avoid putting your own safety and that of others at risk.

### Here are a few options to consider for a safe holiday season and new year:

- Use public transportation
- Arrange to sleep at the party venue or stay somewhere within walking distance
- Call a taxi
- Use a designated driver service
- Designate a non-drinking person to drive you home

## PUT AN END TO IMPAIRED DRIVING

If you plan to consume drugs or alcohol, make sure you have a safe way to get home. Take transit, call a taxi, or catch a ride with a friend.

Drinking and driving can cause accidents, but it can also cost you your driver's licence and land you in jail.

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