

## 27 acres of Millstream Creek Watershed protected



Braedan Donaldson of Goldstream Hatchery releasing salmon into the Millstream Creek Watershed to provide young fish with a refuge from high flows downstream.



Cathy Armstrong carrying pre-smolt coho salmon to be released into the Millstream Creek Watershed via Earsman Creek and Mary Lake. Photos credit Paul Grieve.

Our community's response to TLC's fall campaign to protect 27-acres of Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem in the Millstream Creek Watershed last fall has surpassed our wildest expectations! With a federal grant from the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada's Nature Fund, a generous anonymous donor matching funds 4:1, and individual TLC member and donor support, we raised more than \$600,000 for the acquisition. Additionally, an endowment fund of \$68,500 has been established with

the Victoria Foundation for the long-term stewardship of this property.

In partnership with Goldstream Hatchery, Peninsula Streams Society, Tsartlip First Nation, and Greater Victoria Greenbelt Society, we released 2,500 coho salmon into the watershed in late February. Their release into Earsman Creek and Mary Lake will encourage the salmon to imprint the area before they make their way to the ocean by late May. Their return will depend on their success in outmigration, ocean

survival, and return migration, but we anticipate their return by the fall of 2022.

In this edition of the LANDmark, you will read more about TLC's current initiatives including our latest project: SISĆENEM (Halibut Island) in the Salish Sea. In this ground-breaking partnership, we will be working with WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council to develop an eco-cultural restoration plan and conservation covenant before transferring title of the 9.67-acre island to the WSÁNEĆ community. We believe this to be the first time a Canadian land trust has transferred property to a First Nation.

You will also find more about TLC's 2021 educational and restoration activities. With COVID continuing to make gatherings unsafe, we have published virtual opportunities to engage our fellow naturalists including an activity book for families and kids looking to connect with nature. We hope you'll be inspired to get outdoors and appreciate B.C.'s biodiversity this season!

Cathy Armstrong  
Executive Director

# SISÇENEM (Halibut Island) Conserved in Partnership with WSÁNEĆ Nations

**B**undled against the cold wind and thankful that the sun was shining that early December day, I sat on the back of a small Salish Sea Industrial Services vessel on my way to TLC's newest project located off the east coast of Sidney Island: SISÇENEM.

Also known as Halibut Island, the 9.67-acre island was recently purchased by TLC for \$1.55 million with the support of one major donor to protect the site's cultural, ecological, and geological significance. TLC plans to work together with the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council to draft and register a conservation covenant and develop a co-management plan that will incorporate Indigenous land management principles and provide access for cultural, educational,

research, and monitoring purposes, before transferring title of SISÇENEM to the WSÁNEĆ for long-term stewardship. The transfer will be historically significant as the first of its kind between a land trust and an Indigenous community in Canada.

Working with the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council, I have come to learn more about the cultural importance and meaning of SISÇENEM (pronounced *sees - kunn - num*). While not easily translatable to English as a whole, the syllables of the name SISÇENEM convey a vivid sense of place: SISK means "enjoying the sun," ÇEN is a feeling of inner peace, and EM means a place where these things happen. Together, SISÇENEM means sitting out for pleasure of the weather.

SISÇENEM is an important cultural place where the WSÁNEĆ people would fish for cod, collect traditional medicines, and harvest camas. According to WSÁNEĆ Elder SELILIYE (Belinda Claxton), "We went to harvest seagull eggs and boxwood and different types of medicine. Or, during minus tide we would get sea urchins and stick shoes (chitons)."

My colleagues Cathy Armstrong and Karen Iwachow, our partner Ian Bruce from Peninsula Streams Society, and Salish Sea's marine salvage specialists joined me for the brisk site visit to determine the extent of the next task in our stewardship of SISÇENEM: the careful removal and recycling of equipment that litters the beach on the north end of the island.

We were met by Dr. Tara Martin, UBC Faculty of Forestry's Conservation Decisions Lab Head, and her Research Assistant Abbie Sherwood. Dr. Martin knows this island well; the Salish Sea is a focal point of her research. According to Dr. Martin, SISÇENEM is an ecological and cultural jewel, "There are only a handful of islands like this left in the Salish Sea."

You can join Dr. Martin in helping to protect this remarkable island. While the acquisition has been fully-funded by a generous donor, TLC is raising funds to complete restoration work on the north end of the island including the removal of equipment left on the beach and submerged near the landing site. In addition, funds raised will support the

drafting and registration of the conservation covenant, a baseline inventory, and ongoing monitoring of the site.

Three donors have stepped forward to offer a matching gift opportunity to help us reach our \$60,000 goal this spring. You can support this historic project, protect ecological habitat in the Salish Sea, and have your tax-deductible gift matched 2:1 by making your gift today. ■



*Get in touch with Dianna Stenberg, TLC's Deputy Executive Director, to get involved and support SISÇENEM at (250) 479-8053 or [dstenberg@conservancy.bc.ca](mailto:dstenberg@conservancy.bc.ca).*

## NEW MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITY

**Three donors have generously stepped forward to match contributions 2:1 to reach \$60,000 this spring**

Funds raised this spring will support the careful crafting of a conservation covenant to remain on title in perpetuity to protect the ecological value of the island, as well as provide access for monitoring and research purposes. Restoration work including the removal of old equipment on the north end of the island is also a priority to ensure the integrity of the site.

With our current matching gift opportunity you can make your gift go further in protecting this biologically diverse gem: your gift will be tripled in value!

**Donate today by calling 1-877-485-2422 or visiting [www.conservancy.bc.ca/halibut](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca/halibut)**



Pre-COVID, TLC's Board member Sara Wickham (left) and Dr. Tara Martin visited Halibut Island in the Salish Sea. Photo credit Cathy Armstrong.

Showcased on a sunny winter day in December 2020, SISÇENEM supports Garry oak, arbutus, and Douglas fir woodlands, and open wildflower meadows carpeted with camas, fawn lily, and chocolate lily. Photo credit Karen Iwachow.



Briony Penn, Karen Iwachow, and Torrey Archer (left to right) hiking in Wells Gray Provincial Park during TLC's 2019 Deertrails Naturalist Program.

## Are You A Naturalist?

Do you love exploring the natural world, hunting for elusive lichen, moss, and fungi, and appreciate accurately identifying new species? TLC's Deertrails Naturalist Program was designed for you!

From August 30 to September 6, 2021, participants will explore the Clearwater River Valley, from the volcanic and glacial formations which shape the

landscape of Wells Gray Provincial Park to the hair lichen required to sustain mountain caribou, through a series of naturalist-led walks and talks. Participants will learn from seasoned naturalists and teachers Briony Penn, Lyn Baldwin, Trevor Goward, Malea Acker, Nancy Turner, and Nancy Flood. To learn more about the 2021 program and apply today, visit [www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca).

## Activities for Naturalists of all Ages



Spring marks the beginning of our activity-packed monitoring and restoration year at TLC. Our biologists, technicians, and land managers are excitedly scheduling their next few months to take advantage of weather and flourishing flora for baseline assessments and surveys of species in rare form during this time of year.

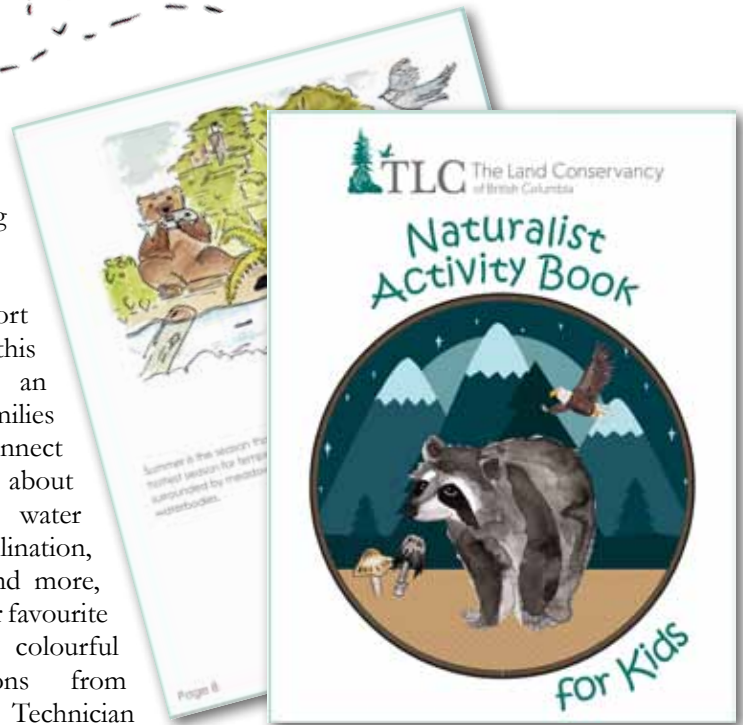
This period of renewed growth is a wonderful opportunity for the naturalist in us all to get outdoors and explore what this beautiful province has to offer. TLC's Passport to Nature has been a guide for engaging in environmental education and engagement for the last two years.

Unfortunately, this program has been impacted by the COVID pandemic. To ensure the safety of our members and volunteers, this year we have re-designed the Passport to Nature to include virtual workshops and tutorials to get nature-lovers

outside without needing to gather in one place.

In addition to our Passport to Nature Program, this year we have added an activity book for families and kids looking to connect with nature. Learn about species identification, water conservation, pollination, ecosystem functions, and more, all from your backyard or favourite greenspace. With colourful watercolour illustrations from TLC's Environmental Technician & Land Manager Karen Iwachow and detailed activities and facts written by Student Technician Paul Grieve, this fun-filled activity book is sure to engage the young naturalist in your life.

You can view all of TLC's Passport to Nature activities and our Naturalist



Activity Book online at [www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca) or request a hard copy by reaching out to us at any time by email at [membership@conservancy.bc.ca](mailto:membership@conservancy.bc.ca) or phone 1-877-485-2422. We hope you find these activities a welcome break in nature as we head into spring!

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### TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in memory of:

Gordon Alexander, Carlo Felice Bezio, Janice Clements, Colleen Coppin, Alan Littler, Philip Manders, Warren Nickerson, Elizabeth Riehm, Lois Sutherland, & Marguerite Watson

*To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422*