

This spring we announced a truly landmark project in the Salish Sea with not one, but two matching gift opportunities. Your support for SISÇENEM (Halibut Island) has been incredibly gratifying: our supporters have stepped up to raise more than \$100,000 to restore and protect this unique project that combines our ecological mission with the concerns of the local WSÁNEĆ community.

TLC's conservation covenant under development on SISÇENEM is one of 10 currently being drafted in addition to a newly registered covenant on Cortes Island. Protecting 6.67 hectares (16.49 acres), the southern Cortes Island covenant includes provincially designated ecological communities and species at risk in the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone. The site also provides connectivity for a wildlife corridor that spans the island from Hank's Beach Forest Conservation Park in the west to Poison Cove in the east and is utilized by majestic grey wolves (*Canis lupus*).

In this special conservation covenant edition of the LANDmark, you will read more about the new Cortes Island covenant; the work that goes into establishing and continuing to protect the covenants in our portfolio from physical monitoring to legal defence; and how our partnerships with private land owners, Indigenous communities, and charitable foundations can create sustainable, lasting protection for ecosystems and species at risk.

Before recycling or forwarding this newsletter on to a fellow nature enthusiast, be sure to check out how you can get involved with TLC as COVID-19 restrictions shift. From volunteering to exploring nature with our *Passport to Nature*, there are opportunities for all to join us in protecting biodiversity.



Cathy Armstrong
Executive Director

WSÁNEĆ community members on SISÇENEM where we are partnering to create a new conservation covenant. Photo credit Alex Harris.



**CONSERVATION
COVENANT EDITION**

The newly protected covenant on southern Cortes Island. Photo credit Laurel Brewster.

Want to learn
more about TLC's
accessible conservation
covenants near you?

Visit www.conservancy.bc.ca
to view TLC's Visitor's Guide
to our publicly accessible
conservation covenants
and properties.

Creating Corridors with Conservation Covenants

By Karen Iwachow
Environmental Technician & Land Manager

Cortes Island is nestled in the Discovery Islands between Campbell River and the mainland coast of British Columbia on the traditional territories of the Klahoose and Tla'amin First Nations. Known for its wilderness and nature based community, Cortes is home to TLC conservation covenants covering 1,083 acres of land ranging from private properties, managed forests, farmland and regional parks, effectively protecting 3.5% of the island in perpetuity.

The Cortes community values the island's rich and stunning natural landscapes: locals are participating in projects to strategically protect land and create wildlife corridors that extend from shore to shore across the island. This has been a collaborative effort with the regional district in protecting Hank's Beach Forest Conservation Park; business owners like Hollyhock Farm; and private land owners. Conservation covenants have been a powerful and successful legal tool in safeguarding these areas.

A family on southern Cortes Island are our newest partners in conservation. Their conservation covenant adds 16.5 acres of old growth Coastal Western Hemlock forest containing provincially designated sensitive ecosystems of herbaceous, woodland, and wetland areas which provide a safe haven for animal and plant species listed at-risk of extinction including the Northern Red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*) and the Band-tailed pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*). A significant wildlife travel corridor straddles the southern boundary of the property with wildlife traveling between Hank's Beach Forest Conservation Park in the west to/from Poison Cove in the east.

A conservation covenant is a voluntary, written agreement between a landowner and a covenant holder (e.g., a governing body or land trust). It can cover a portion or all of a property. The agreement, which becomes registered on property title in the British Columbia Land Title Register under section 219 of the Land Title Act, runs with the land regardless of who owns it. The beauty of these agreements is that they are tailored to the land itself: TLC holds 247 conservation covenants across the province and no two are alike.

For the landowners, protecting the forest of their residential lot and maintaining a home with a yard and garden were priorities. Conservation covenants provide private individuals a functional way of contributing to ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change while maintaining that human to nature relationship.

Conservation covenants legally protect habitat by restricting uses of the land from concerns such as destruction of natural features (i.e., development) and habitat fragmentation (i.e., subdivision of the lands). Provisions may include that the land or a specified amenity be protected, preserved, conserved, maintained, enhanced, restored, or kept in its natural or existing state. The covenant holder then enforces the covenant if the owner does not abide by its terms.

After a conservation covenant is registered, it becomes TLC's obligation to monitor the land on an annual basis to ensure that the protected areas are supporting healthy ecosystems and that the terms of the covenant are being upheld. Breaches of the covenant are rare but can go to court if initial dispute

resolution attempts fail.

Conservation covenants do require some investment. To create a sustainable practice, many conservation covenant holders require endowment funds to cover the costs of annual monitoring, reporting, and court costs if they arise. These funds are typically provided by the landowner at the time of registration and held with an institution like the Victoria Foundation or the Vancouver Foundation.

Folks who are interested in placing a conservation covenant on their lands can expect a process that can take a year to complete. It begins with a site visit by TLC staff who will learn more about why the natural landscape is important to you and determine its connectivity to other spaces. Once the project is approved by TLC's Board of Directors, land surveys and ecological baseline information are collected. We can also investigate tax benefit opportunities for the land owner such as Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. Next, the legal covenant agreement is drafted by TLC. Both parties have the opportunity to have the covenant document reviewed by their respective lawyers before it's registered with the Land Titles Office and takes effect protecting the land in perpetuity. ■



TLC's Environmental Technician & Land Manager, Karen Iwachow, has worked for TLC since 2017. To learn more about covenants, please email covenants@conservancy.bc.ca

6 Favourite Functions of Covenant Coordination

Larissa Bron is TLC's Covenant Coordinator. While she just started working with TLC for a maternity leave cover in May, she is no stranger to the organization: Larissa was a participant at TLC's first Deertrails Naturalist Program session. To learn a more about her role on TLC's land management team, here's a peek into Larissa's routine.

Each day is different for me as there are over 240 covenants at the moment and 10 new covenants in the works – each with unique needs! As the coordinator, you can find me visiting covenants throughout British Columbia and completing ecological baselines, annual monitoring, or meeting with landholders. When I'm not out in the field, I'm working on communicating with partner organizations and landholders, organizing field data for reports, brainstorming new ways to connect with the community, and currently I'm writing a restoration plan for Ayum Creek.

I have been curious about the living world as far back as I can remember, although it was later in my twenties that I began pursuing education to support my fascination. This started with an

Environmental Technology diploma from SAIT in Calgary where I learned techniques including environmental sampling, map creation, and field safety. Now I am working towards a designation as an R.P.Bio (professional biologist) by completing a bachelor of science degree at UVic, supported by work and volunteer experience that supports my passion for conservation, ecology, and restoration.

In 2019, I participated in TLC's Deertrails Naturalist Program which was an immersive week of strengthening and creating new connections with the living world. This was a transformative week for me where I learned how to integrate my artistic and scientific background to better support the more-than-human world through my work. TLC's dedication to empowering communities through education is what initially attracted me to this role, which now enables me to support others in protecting special places through our programs in education, restoration, and covenant creation. ■

1 Fungi are incredible! I'm having a blast learning more about fungi to prepare for my upcoming *Passport to Nature* presentation that will be available October 11th online. During covenant monitoring we have been observing the return of mushrooms as the changing season bring rain to Vancouver Island. This is a visual wonder and ode to the multitude of ways fungi support our forests including parasitism, providing plants with hard to access nutrients, and decomposing. Register for my *Passport to Nature* event online anytime.

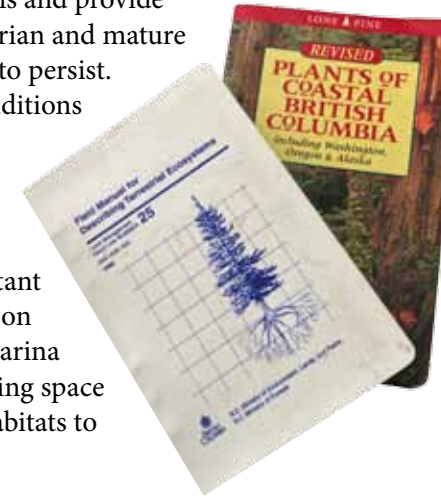
2 I learn something new about the living world from volunteers, friends, and TLC's Environmental Technician & Land Manager Karen Iwachow whenever we are out in the field. For instance, did you know that the presence of caddisfly larvae is an excellent indicator of stream health since caddisflies are very sensitive to pollution? Or that a rectangular hole in a tree is a likely sign of a pileated woodpecker excavation? There is no better way to learn about nature than by experiencing it with good company.

3 Recently I have been collaborating with a small team to develop and register two new covenants on Cortes Island that support a growing band of protected areas. This connectivity will enhance a wildlife corridor for mammals and provide continuity for riparian and mature forest ecosystems to persist. The upcoming additions to the corridor will provide coastal grey wolves access to seasonally important marine resources on the neighbouring Marina Island, as well as allowing space for the interconnected habitats to thrive.

4 TLC's field team is working on completing multiple ecological baseline reports for our properties this year. These reports will provide a snapshot of the conditions of a property and the context for conservation, which will then be used in monitoring and restoration to ensure these places remain protected. I get to exercise my body and mind while working on baselines as the work includes everything from exploring the interplay of ecosystems by bushwhacking to researching an area's natural history.

5 My motivation and drive are at an all-time high as I am constantly inspired by the passion of people working in conservation. For example, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) is our local conservation partner and co-holder on a covenant we are drafting in Gibsons. The SCCA's passion and deep knowledge of the local ecologies are providing increased protection for some of the last remaining intact mature dryland Douglas fir - arbutus forest and coastal bluff ecosystems on our coast.

6 Volunteering outdoors has been central to developing my local natural knowledge and making new friends in my community. I'm looking forward to putting my recent experiences in invasive species removal to work this fall by creating volunteer ecological restoration opportunities within TLC covenants. Look out for upcoming events where you can practice removing and identifying invasive species with me! One project I'm excited about is continuing and building upon the successful periwinkle removal project that TLC started in 2017 at Ayum Creek Regional Park.



Larissa Bron is TLC's Covenant Coordinator. Her work this year is varied and includes monitoring TLC's conservation covenants and creating new restoration plans.

Background: The Coastal Western Hemlock forest of the newly protected Cortes Island Covenant that Larissa has been collaborating on. Photo credit Laurel Brewster. Above: A few items Larissa doesn't leave the office without.



TLC's Biologist & Land Manager Torrey Archer at the Vida Covenant. Photo credit Karen Iwachow.

The Fight to Protect Habitat Continues

By Dianna Stenberg
Deputy Executive Director

This summer, the protection of a 2-acre bird and wildlife sanctuary in Coquitlam was upheld by the Supreme Court of British Columbia after a landowner petitioned to have a conservation covenant held by TLC removed. The conservation covenant was registered on title in 2005 to protect the habitat in perpetuity. The conservation covenant restricts development and preserves the mature second growth forest for the benefit of wildlife migrating between the Pinecone Burke Provincial Park and the Pitt River.

Seeking to gain greater financial benefit from the sale of the property without the covenant on title, the petitioner argued that the importance of the habitat had been diminished because the neighbourhood surrounding the property had been developed subsequent to the covenant being registered on title. In her ruling,

Justice Lamb sided with TLC and third-party environmental experts that the protection of urban greenspace is more critical than ever as densification occurs.

“[T]he Property is an important refuge from the pressures of urbanization,” said Justice Lamb in her *Reasons for Judgement*. “A variety of bird species continue to frequent the property to visit the bird feeders and to build nests in the forest. The forest offers sanctuary and nourishment to small mammals and amphibians.”

While pleased that Justice Lamb upheld our efforts to protect biodiversity and the wildlife sanctuary, the need to defend our conservation covenants in court showcases that land trusts will have to continue to fight to uphold their intent. In B.C., land trusts like TLC hold more than 1,200 covenants on properties including riparian areas, shorelines, forests, and

grasslands. TLC's more than 240 covenants protect more than 12,000 acres.

Legally defending TLC's conservation covenants, along with regular monitoring and relationship-building with other stakeholders, is a necessary part of ensuring ecosystems remain protected. To enable the organization to uphold these responsibilities, new covenants are required to include endowment funds or annual fees to support potential legal defense and other annual monitoring costs in perpetuity. ■



TLC's Deputy Executive Director, Dianna Stenberg, is passionate about communicating conservation and climate change.

Passport to Nature Goes Worldwide

By Lisa Cross
Donor Relations Manager & Grants Coordinator

Earlier this year we asked, “Are you a naturalist?” and judging by the fantastic participation in this year’s *Passport to Nature*, and the numerous requests for our new *Naturalist Activity Book for Kids* you’ve answered with a resounding YES!

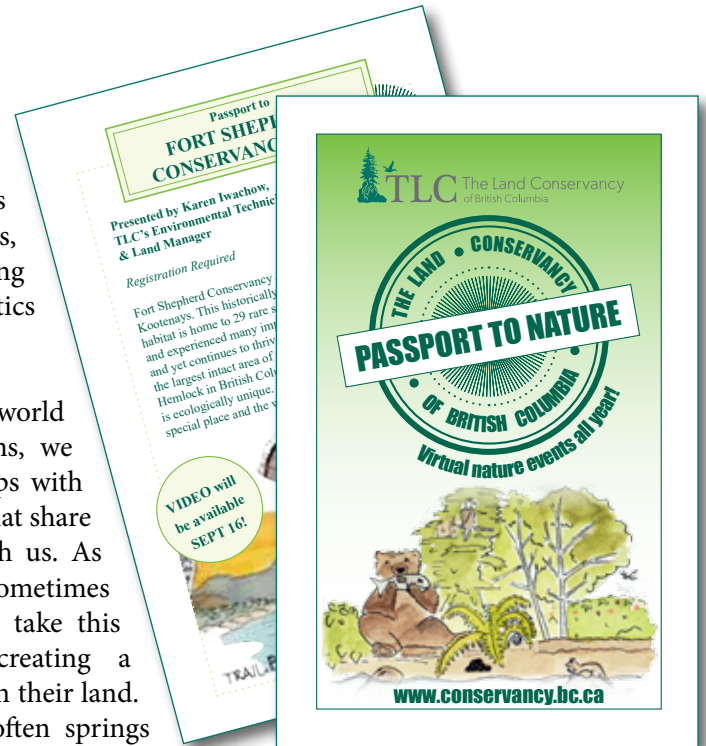
The upside of going virtual this year is we’ve been able to offer accessible programming to anyone, *anywhere*. We are thrilled to have had participants take part from Haida Gwaii to Newfoundland, Washington State to New Hampshire, and all the way across the pond, in the U.K.! From Nature Journaling to Moss Masterclass, there’s something to encourage the budding naturalist in everyone.

Being a naturalist doesn’t require special training; you are a naturalist when you are enduringly curious about the natural world around you. You are a naturalist when you learn the names and habits of the birds that visit your backyard, or when you walk down your favourite trail, dog-eared plant ID book in hand, noting various shrubs coming into bud, bloom, and berry, or when you take the

time to be still in nature, observing busy ants on an anthill, pollinators flitting between blossoms, or dragonflies executing complex aerobatics overhead.

When we look at the world through a naturalist lens, we build deeper relationships with the plants and animals that share this precious planet with us. As this issue highlights, sometimes a landowner decides to take this appreciation further, creating a conservation covenant on their land. This desire to protect often springs from a long-time, naturalist-based relationship with the wildlife their land supports.

This fall I invite you to embrace your inner naturalist. Sit quietly in your own backyard and observe the abundance of life around you. What do you see, hear, smell, and feel? I would love to hear about your observations and discoveries - please share your stories with us! ■



Download a copy of TLC’s 2021 *Passport to Nature* or our *Naturalist Activity Book* at www.conservancy.bc.ca or request a hard copy from Lisa, TLC’s Donor Relations Manager & Grants Coordinator, today by calling 1-877-485-2422 or email lcross@conservancy.bc.ca.



Passport to FANTASTIC FUNGI



Join TLC staff in exploring the magical world of fungus. Learn about their role in forests, how to identify common species, and interesting applications of fungi in habitat restoration.

Register for TLC’s VIRTUAL Passport to Nature events to ensure you are provided with direct links to videos when they become available!

Passport to MOSS MASTERCLASS



Often in the shadows of bigger more boisterous mega-flora, moss is usually out of focus as a green background. Learn more about some of the 16,000 species of moss, their anatomy, where you might find them, their roles in ecosystems and medicine!



TLC staff, volunteers, and partners at SISÇENEM (Halibut Island). Photo credit Alex Harris.



Stewardship & Sustainability

By Dianna Stenberg
Deputy Executive Director

As you are likely aware, TLC's mission is to protect and restore the biological diversity of B.C. for present and future generations through action and education. This feat is more than any one individual could accomplish; our programming requires the support of a stewardship network and a long-term, sustainable outlook.

Many of our conservation covenants and the properties to which we hold title have a network of stakeholders behind them, strengthening our potential for success. In the case of SISÇENEM, the local

Indigenous and scientific communities have come together to protect this culturally and ecologically important site.

Our generous TLC members and donors, who protect the at-risk areas of concern throughout our province, are integral to our sustainability. This spring multiple donors came forward to offer matching opportunities to support covenant and restoration work on SISÇENEM and inspired supporters to contribute a combined \$100,000 toward the island. This kind of generosity – and the offer to match gifts – inspired hundreds to give.

Our volunteer board of directors is another critical section of our network: with expertise in law, public policy, project management, accounting, education, and more, our board provides considerable knowledge to our team.

In programs like TLC's *Deertrails Naturalist Program*, seasoned naturalists volunteer their time to offer the highest calibre of training to those looking to get started in conservation, thus growing our network for the future.

The COVID-19 situation around the province remains concerning for in-person involvement, however, physically-distanced opportunities remain. Specifically, our restoration work at Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve in Sooke continues, as does our need for composting and chipping volunteers at Abkhazi Garden.

To find out how you can get involved, visit our website for volunteer opportunity listings, or reach out to us at (250) 479-8053, toll free at 1-877-485-2422, or email membership@conservancy.bc.ca. ■

TLC Board of Directors

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

Maryone Beisiegel, Carlo Felice Bezio, Colleen Coppin, Robin W. Edwards, Robert Holcomb, Brian Hystad, Alan Littler, Caroline Miller, David Morris, Warren Nickerson, Dick Pearson, and Lois Sutherland

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