

Fall 2022

# LANDmark

Celebrating 25 Years of Conservation



# TLC

The Land Conservancy  
of British Columbia

TLC is working with Salt Spring Island  
Conservancy and local supporters  
to protect Creekside Rainforest.  
Photo credit Alex Harris.



This year marks TLC's 25th anniversary of conservation. To celebrate, our board of directors issued a challenge to those who care about the ecosystems and habitats our lands protect: the first \$40,000 of gifts made to our new 25th Anniversary Endowment Fund would be matched dollar-for-dollar. To date we have raised more than \$100,000 toward the endowment fund, now established with the Victoria Foundation. Additional gifts to support the ongoing protection of our most precious sites can be made by donating to TLC or directly to the Victoria Foundation.

This summer we have been digging into archival records with Royal Roads University professor and filmmaker Geoff Bird. Geoff is creating a documentary on the history of Abkhazi Garden; stay tuned for how you can watch this film this fall.

In Otter Point we have been working with the Juan de Fuca Community Land Trust Society and the Capital Regional District to protect 58 acres of second growth forest known as Admiral's Forest. A wildlife corridor between the Sooke Hills and the ocean, the lands will become park reserve.

Partnerships like these have been pivotal to TLC's success. This LANDmark is full of examples of how our work is best accomplished in partnership with members of the communities in which we work. In this edition you will read about two local legends leaving legacies in conservation, our project with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, and much more.

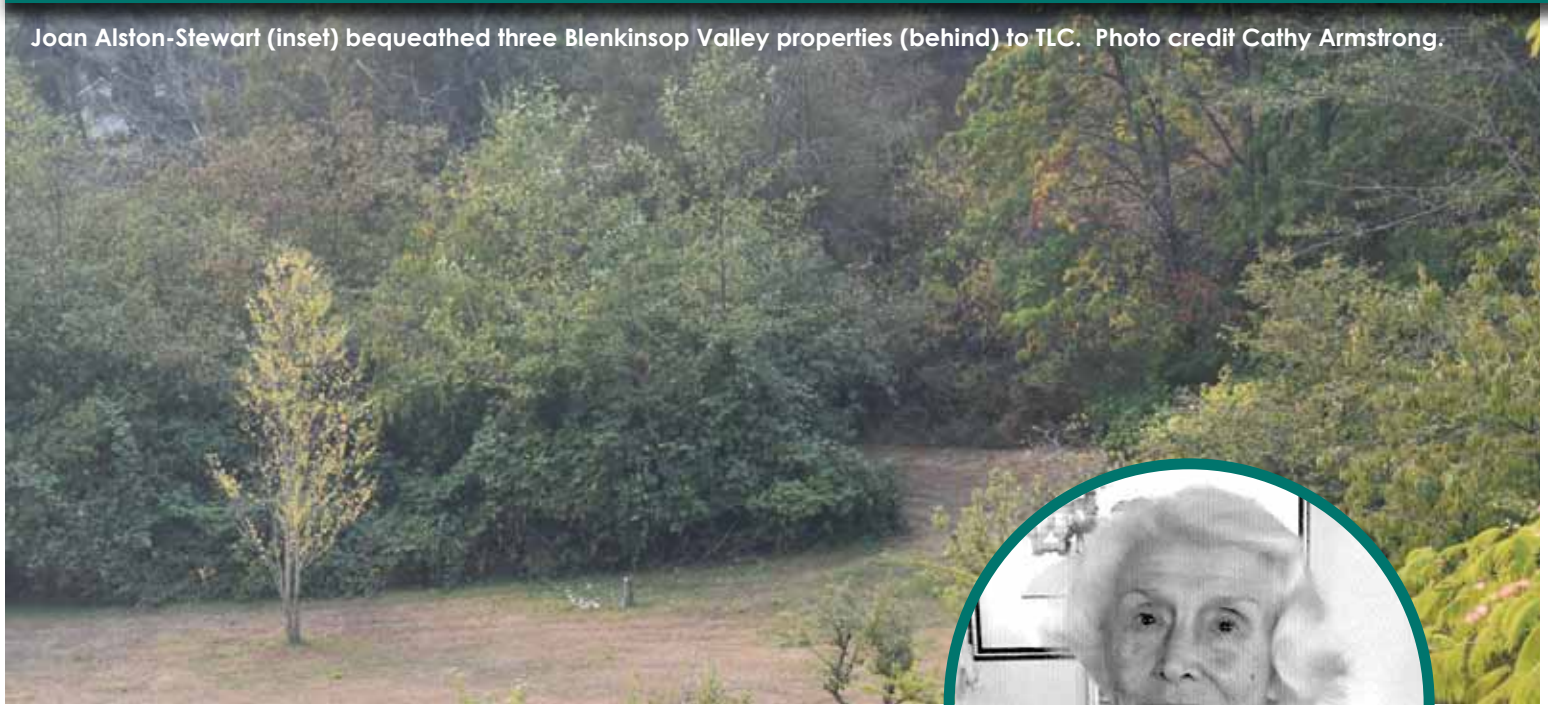
If you are looking for further recourses, background information, or news from TLC, I encourage you to visit our website [www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca). There you can find digital copies of our newest *Naturalist Activity Book for Kids* featuring Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area and the species found in its grasslands. You can also register for one of our upcoming *Passport to Nature* events to learn more about sustaining healthy soil, how you can visit a TLC protected area, or how you can work with native flora.



Happy reading!

Cathy Armstrong  
Executive Director

Joan Alston-Stewart (inset) bequeathed three Blenkinsop Valley properties (behind) to TLC. Photo credit Cathy Armstrong.



## Bequest Protects 8 Acres in the Blenkinsop Valley

By Dianna Stenberg  
Deputy Executive Director

This fall, TLC was honoured to announce the receipt of a bequest of three adjacent properties in the Blenkinsop Valley, funds to maintain the properties in perpetuity, and a \$40,000 gift to Abkhazi Garden from the estate of Joan Alston-Stewart (nee Lohbrunner). The \$8.8 million bequest is the largest donation in the charity's 25-year history.

Located near Blenkinsop Lake and the Lochside Trail in Saanich, the three adjacent properties span more than 8 acres of wetland, Garry oak, and Douglas-fir habitat. 1074 Donwood Drive (4.94 acres), 4386 Lochside Drive (2.14 acres), and 4394 Lochside Drive (1.00 acre) each consist of single- or dual-family dwellings with significant greenspace. According to their 2022 assessments, the combined value of the land and buildings is over \$5.3 million.

TLC was named among 17 charities and institutions receiving bequeathed gifts

from Joan and will receive one third of the liquid assets from her estate. The land trust's portion is valued at approximately \$3.5 million. Apart from the \$40,000 gift toward Abkhazi Garden, funds donated from the bequest will be used to create an endowment fund with the Victoria Foundation to maintain the Blenkinsop Valley properties in perpetuity in accordance with Joan's wishes.

Pre-deceased by her husband Gordon in 2017, Joan passed away on February 3, 2020, at age 89. Having moved to the Blenkinsop Valley as a young girl, Joan wished to see the lands she and Gordon had called home for decades protected to advance the biodiversity of the Blenkinsop Valley.

In the years prior to her passing, Joan met with TLC staff and board to discuss her wish to protect the urban greenspace surrounding her home for birds and other wildlife. Initially concerned that the

organization had previously undergone restructuring, Joan completed her own research and met with TLC staff to ensure the properties she loved would remain protected.

"It was an honour to meet with Joan and discuss her history with the Blenkinsop Valley, as well as her vision for the future," said Cathy Armstrong, TLC Executive Director. "She was an astute investor who did her homework to ensure our organization was the right steward for her legacy. We are incredibly grateful for her generous donation and look forward to safeguarding the three properties she left in our care."

For more information about planned giving with TLC, please visit [www.conservancy.bc.ca/legacy](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca/legacy) to review our Planned Giving Guide, or contact TLC via [membership@conservancy.bc.ca](mailto:membership@conservancy.bc.ca) or 250-479-8053. ■

# A Community Legend

By Cathy Armstrong  
Executive Director

**O**n August 1st we lost our dear friend and long-time TLC member Marion Cumming at the age of 86. A supporter from the beginning, Marion's kind and thoughtful presence has made an impact on so many of our projects over the years including Abkhazi Garden just down the road from her home in Oak Bay.

Having known that TLC was established with just \$500 in start-up capital, Marion stepped forward in 2012 and donated \$500 and challenged 500 other donors to match her gift. In 2015, she hosted a garage sale at her home in Oak Bay

to raise funds for TLC's conservation covenant program. Marion was a true community action hero: on the front line with ideas and support to help protect the areas that meant the most to her.

I had spoken with Marion the week before she passed; she was eager to hear updates on our work with the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council to transfer SISĆENEM (Halibut Island) as an act of reconciliation. This was an area of passion near to Marion's heart. I recall many similar conversations over the years including her sharing her plans to leave her home in Oak Bay to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. Marion had previously donated lands she held in Cowichan Valley to the Centre. With the intention to honour Lekwungen history and culture, she hoped that her bequest would support the local Indigenous community for



*Marion Cumming (left) with Nikki Sanchez in the 500 for 500 TLC campaign Marion launched in 2012.*

generations to come.

While I'm sad to lose a friend and fellow conservationist, I am honoured to have spent time with Marion. Her legacy will live on in our memories and the many projects she touched. ■

# New Covenant Application & Framework

By Torrey Archer  
Biologist & Land Manager

**A** year is a long time to be away. Then again, it's a blink of an eye when you're becoming a mother. "Thank you" doesn't cut it for how grateful I am to Larissa for all her hard work and conscientious communication in my absence. We are going to miss her something fierce! I'm glad to be back at work at TLC after my maternity leave, despite desperately missing my delightful daughter. I'm privileged to enjoy my work and find it fulfilling knowing that I'm contributing to her future by helping to protect land with people who think long-term.

My first task after my hiatus was to streamline our covenant process for landowners. TLC now has a covenant

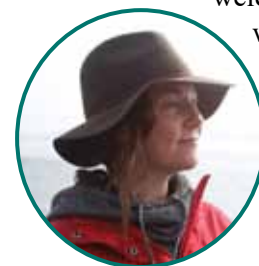
application form that gathers important information about the land you know and love, including a vision statement that can be used to help guide future decisions to ensure your legacy is upheld. A covenant agreement is written in "legalese" which can often leave something to be desired in terms of descriptive language. By having a vision statement, TLC is better equipped to steward the land in the way you intended.

We have also updated our internal covenant process by developing an acquisition framework, intended to help gauge the various merits of a property and how they align with TLC's Strategic Plan. Each property is unique and must be evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively; our framework helps with the latter as it weighs aspects like connectivity to other protected lands, presence of streams or waterbodies, maturity of the forest, special habitat, or Species at Risk on the land. TLC staff will use this information to bolster support for your covenant application and ensure we are doing our best to deliver on our

promise to our members and donors to protect lands of ecological significance. I'm excited to share this new intake process with interested landowners. Registering a covenant is no small task and requires excellent communication. We hope our new application will start things off on a helpful and efficient note. You can access the application on our website or request a hardcopy via 1-877-486-2422 or [covenants@conservancy.bc.ca](mailto:covenants@conservancy.bc.ca).

While we wish we could protect every square inch of B.C., we must be discerning in our efforts. Much like motherhood, where I must be careful not to spread myself too thin lest I not have enough in my tank to give to my daughter, TLC must choose wisely to ensure living beings without voices are protected. We

welcome new projects with open arms and a fierce desire to protect them, much like a mother's love. Something I intimately know, now. ■





## Rainforest on Salt Spring Island to be Protected through Land Trust Partnership



By Dianna Stenberg  
Deputy Executive  
Director

**B**undled in our jackets, toques, and gloves, I'm joined by TLC

staff and local Salt Spring Island supporters in the cool shade of one of the island's rare coastal temperate rainforests. Enormous bigleaf maples (*Acer macrophyllum*) and western redcedars (*Thuja plicata*) – some believed to be 250 years old – surround and tower over us, leaving our small group a bit chilly on this rainy fall day.

The 15.5-acre Creekside Rainforest property is located on the east coast of Salt Spring Island. This area is the territory of the Cowichan, Penelakut, Paquachin, Malahat, Tsawout, Tsartlip, and Tseycum Nations. Evidence of their habitation including culturally modified trees and

village sites in the nearby estuary make this important area significant from a cultural as well as ecological perspective. The vanilla leaf (*Achlystriphylla*), thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*), blackcap raspberry (*Rubus Leucodermis*), and huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) found on the property have been cultivated for generations.

Fallen bigleaf maple leaves litter our path and swish and crunch as we shuffle through them. The walking trail we are following bisects the property and winds parallel to Cusheon Creek below us in the deep, forested ravine. From this vantage point, the steep valley walls are pronounced. In one section water trickles across our path and down the valley toward the creek; any disturbance to the area on the upper ridges would have a significant impact on the pristine creek habitat below.

The shady forest that is keeping us bundled today also acts to keep the creek at the valley

bottom cool despite increasing annual temperatures. This undisturbed tree canopy and the shade it provides makes this pristine creek an ideal environment for salmon. Directly connected to an estuary at Cusheon Cove, salmonids swim upstream through this section of the creek to their spawning and rearing habitat.

As we continue our hike, we are surrounded by a spectrum of shades of green: from a variety of moss and lichen that adorn the trees to sword ferns (*Polystichum munitum*) that fill the understory, shade-loving plants thrive in this intact forest. This lush property includes two ecosystems that are provincially classified as imperiled: western redcedar-Douglas-fir-Oregon beaked moss and western redcedar-grand fir-foamflower. This moist environment is also prime for endangered gastropods (i.e., slugs and snails) under threat from habitat loss and fragmentation. In fact, blue-listed broadwhorl tightcoil (*Pristiloma johnsoni*)

and threaded vertigo (*Nearctula sp.*) are anticipated to occur on the property.

A variety of species at risk call these ecosystems home. The blue-listed great blue heron (*Ardea herodias fannini*) and northern red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*) both require the combination of riparian and forested habitat found in the rainforest for success in breeding and foraging. We anticipate finding species at risk including little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), and western screech-owl (*Megascops kennicottii kennicottii*) given the habitat and identification in adjoining areas.

Thankfully, 19.5 acres to the west of this parcel were protected in 2008. As well, Salt Spring Island's network of protected areas help the Cusheon Creek corridor to avoid fragmentation for the health of the rainforest and the wildlife that find sanctuary within it.

In partnership with Salt Spring Island Conservancy (SSIC), TLC is raising funds to keep Creekside Rainforest intact through acquisition. SSIC will hold title in perpetuity to protect this riparian area and allow access for light hiking and educational opportunities. With a grant and local community support we have raised more than 95% required to protect

this rainforest. Today, we are fundraising the final \$20,000 to complete this project.

You can support Creekside Rainforest on Salt Spring Island by making a tax-receiptable gift toward the project. Donations can be made by visiting TLC's website at [www.conservancy.bc.ca/donate](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca/donate) or calling 1-877-485-2422. ■



Briony Penn (left) and Cathy Armstrong explore Creekside Rainforest with TLC staff and Salt Spring supporters.  
Photo credit Karen Iwachow



Briony Penn inspecting a large western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) on the upper portion of the Creekside Rainforest ravine.  
Photo credit Karen Iwachow



Larissa (left) with Deertrails Participant Sonya at TLC's Clearwater Wetlands and Wildlife Corridor this spring.

Photo credit Karen Iwachow



Larissa monitoring at-risk White-top aster (*Sericocarpus rigidus*) at a conservation covenant in Langford.

Photo credit Karen Iwachow



Larissa (center) at a restoration event she organized with HAT at the Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve in Sooke.

Photo credit Erin Walters

# A Year in Review



Larissa Bron has been filling in as a maternity leave cover on TLC's land management team for the last year. Before she waved goodbye, Larissa shared take-aways from her time with TLC with Deputy Executive Director Dianna Stenberg.

**DS:** We first met when you were a Deertrails participant in 2019. How was your second experience with Deertrails as a member of staff? Any new takeaways?

LB: In 2022, my facilitation role during Deertrails included everything from scrubbing dishes to maintaining the schedule. Most importantly, I had many opportunities to have conversations with the participants. The ideas and perspectives that I gained showed me the importance of scaling up individual efforts to community action. The magic of collaboration can yield interesting and exponentially more powerful results to support the more-than-human world.

**DS:** Where are you headed after TLC?

LB: It's back to the University of Victoria for me! I took a year off from pursuing a bachelor's degree in biology to work with TLC. I am now in my third year of honing skills and learning applications of biology to support conservation. I am looking forward to working more with the UVic Ecological Restoration Club on our long-term prairie and oak ecosystem restoration project, as well as nerding out about pollinators, algae, and mapping. Please join me for restoration work parties or making iNaturalist observations in and around the Salish Sea.

**DS:** How will your time with TLC inform your education and career path?

LB: A significant amount of my work with TLC has involved developing ways to communicate observations from field work to inform stewardship and decision making. I have found that the best tool to translate my time spent in the field is through mapping. Mapping gives spatial meaning to language and pictures, and can remove communication barriers

such as conceptualizing the many-layered interactions between species and ecosystems. My time with TLC is now the official origin story of how I started a geography minor as a biology student.

**DS:** Do you have a favourite memory from the last year? Any "aha!" moments?

LB: Overall, it's been incredibly inspiring to work with TLC staff, members, and conservation partners to protect and steward natural areas. The power of collaboration yields significant returns, especially when finding extra hands to implement ecological restoration at the Ayum Creek covenant! My favorite memory this year was when TLC partnered with Habitat Acquisition Trust and Edward Milne High School for a restoration day at Ayum Creek. More than 30 people turned a mountain of mulch and cardboard into an expansion of TLC's invasive periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) eradication project in three hours. This effort will now contribute to supporting the biodiversity of the upland forests of Ayum Creek, directly improving the health and function of the ecosystems. ■

## NEW ACTIVITY BOOK

The new Fort Shepherd Activity Book for Kids features activities and games for those looking to learn more about the conservancy area.

Receive your digital copy by visiting our website or request a hard copy via 1-877-485-2422 or membership@conservancy.bc.ca

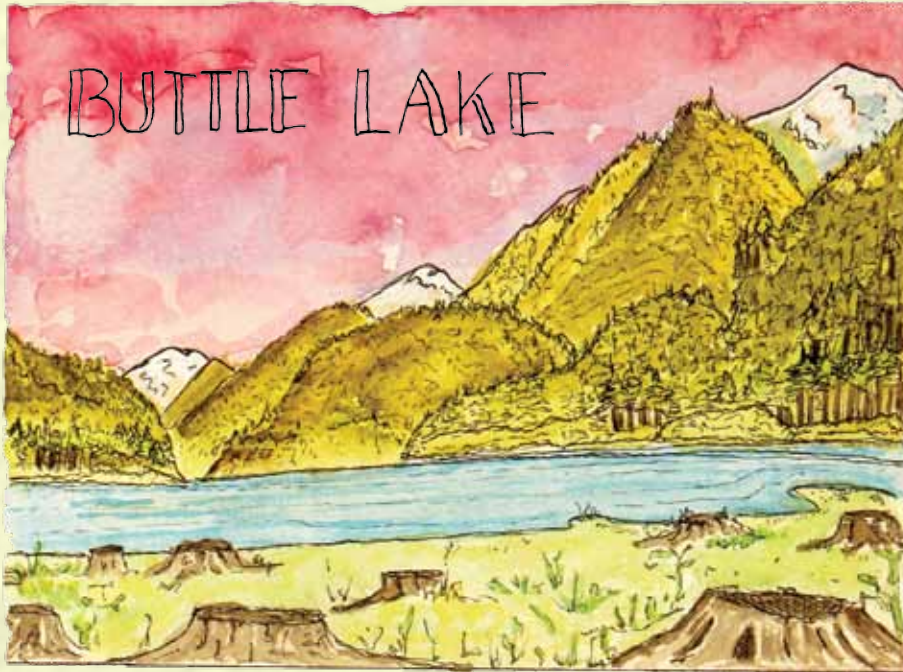


RARE BIRD SIGHTING



Eastern kingbird

Killdeer



Spotted sandpiper



Pine sap



Artwork from Karen's nature journal

# Nature Journaling: Only Curiosity Required

By Karen Iwachow  
Environmental Technician & Land Manager

A few summers ago, I was quietly sitting on a stump on the shore of Buttle Lake in Strathcona Provincial Park at dusk. The skies were pink and orange light dusted the trees on the mountains in front of me.

Voices from the treeline broke the silence and the birds flew out of the willows. I lifted my camera and snapped a few photos of them. Someone yelled 'hey! Are you birding?'. I turned around and saw a group of people with scopes and binoculars hanging off their shoulders.

It turns out there was a rare bird alert, and these were folks from the Comox Valley Naturalist Society hoping to see the Eastern kingbird. It's common in Canada east of the Rockies but a rare sight on Vancouver Island.

I presented my camera screen to show the group what I had seen as the birds flew out of the bushes. First a robin, then a red-winged blackbird and then, the next

picture the crowd roared. 'That's it! That's the kingbird!'. I unknowingly took a photo of this rare bird making it my very first bird sighting!

It got dark and I headed back to my campsite to draw this experience in my journal under lamp light and the flicker of a campfire.

I learned to nature journal while I was helping facilitate TLC's Deertrails Naturalist Program in the Clearwater River Valley. Briony Penn – writer, artist, and founding member of TLC – led a workshop on nature journaling. She explained this is a very old tradition of collecting and organizing observations, questions, and connections. This is how Beatrix Potter inspired her stories. It can look like a notebook with pictures, words, or maps. It requires no artistic or linguistic skills: just your curiosity.

Journaling has enriched my connection with nature. I was someone who

experienced poor mentorship in high school art class and was discouraged to even try. I learned this is a common experience. As a result, I've been inspired to share this with my community: You don't have to be "good" to journal. Not only does the practice deepen your appreciation for nature it also reduces stress, improves inquiry skills, and strengthens memory.

Who decided we must be good at our hobbies?! Using references, tracing, and experimenting is all part of the creative process. I encourage you to play! If you need some help with the blank page, check out my video tutorials with some exercises to get started. ■



View TLC's previously recorded Passport to Nature videos featuring Karen's nature journaling on TLC's website [conservancy.bc.ca](http://conservancy.bc.ca).



Left: Removing the weeds that sprouted up this summer to prepare the field for the meadow. Right: The planting area weed free; watch for updates next spring to see the before and after! Photos credit Lisa Cross.



Spring Gold, Sea Blush, and Camas in bloom earlier this year and will be planted in the meadow this fall.



Yarrow and Woolly Sunflower - two of the plants Lisa is putting in the meadow - from Satinflower Nurseries.

# Creating a Pollinator Meadow

By Lisa Cross  
Donor Relations Manager & Grants Coordinator

Two years ago, I moved to a small acreage on the Saanich Peninsula, previously used for various agricultural ventures, including a sunflower farm. While there is a forested area at the back of the property, the entire front section has transitioned from a farm field into a sprawling lawn. I'm not a fan of lawns, so I knew I wanted to replace it with native plants; the problem was, I wasn't sure where or how to begin!

One of the foundations of permaculture is to spend time observing the land before you plant anything or make any changes. So, I've spent several seasons observing how the water moves through the property, where the sun hits, where it's shady, and what areas are the driest and wettest throughout the year. I've let volunteer plants sprout up and grow – because watching what grows and thrives in an area can tell you a lot about what native species might do well there also. I have to admit, at times it has been

difficult to be patient (I'm someone who likes to dive straight into projects), but the waiting has allowed the land to reveal itself to me, and now I feel I can begin to share its story.

To augment my research, this April I enrolled in the City of Victoria's inaugural, seven-month, *MeadowMakers* program in partnership with Satinflower Nurseries and Pollinator Partnership Canada, and have been learning how to restore urban spaces, of all sizes, to native plant meadows.

This summer, I (fortuitously?) had to replace my septic field and was left with a large expanse of bare soil. Instead of reseeding with turf grass, I knew this would be the perfect opportunity to finally start a pollinator meadow of my own! My vision was to use a combination of plants that would offer a long blooming season, providing ongoing pollinator resources. Knowing I didn't have the

expertise to pull off a project of this scope on my own, I had an onsite consultation with Satinflower Nurseries. After reviewing the site, they have helped me determine which native plants are best suited and have created a custom seed blend and planting program for the project.

I will be planting and seeding this fall and will continue to share updates on how the project is coming along. I'm excited to get started and hope



I can inspire you to support local pollinators by adding a few native plants to your garden or planter boxes. ■

TLC Board of Directors  
Paleah Black Moher ■ Kelly Fretwell ■ Mel Lehan  
Lori Roter ■ Jeff Sheldrake ■ Fran Sloan Sainas  
Andrew Stewart ■ Tom Watson ■ Sara Wickham

TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in the memory of:  
**Colleen Coppin, Bob Drew-Brook, Ann Kingerlee, and Alan Littler**  
*To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422*