



Georgia Strait Alliance

SPRING 2018

# STRAIT TALK

*Caring for Our Coastal Waters*

[www.GeorgiaStrait.org](http://www.GeorgiaStrait.org)

## GATHERING, CELEBRATING & MOBILIZING

Thousands gathered earlier this year for a mass mobilization in Metro Vancouver, led by Tsleil-Waututh members, spiritual leaders, and youth. More than 10,000 people came together to protect our coast, land and climate from Kinder Morgan's dangerous pipeline and tanker project.

This is an example of how, with your support, we are gathering and working together to protect our coastal waters by being positive agents for change.



photo: Liz McDowell



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# STRAIT THOUGHTS

## Gathering, celebrating and protecting our coast

*by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director*

When I have the pleasure of running into a Georgia Strait Alliance member who took part in our events and activities in the early 1990s, during the first few years of the organization's existence, I tend to notice a recurring theme: these events were gatherings of like-minded people, who were passionate about the region and wanted to work together to make a difference in protecting these waters. The events were also often a lot of fun—from what I'm told!

The way things are done in the early years of an organization often sets the culture and practice for how success is built in the years that follow. Nothing could be more true for GSA. The spirit of gathering together, collaborating across experiences for a common goal, turning passion into action, and enjoying the beauty of the region we love, continues to be a big part of our work today—and among the daily focus of each of our staff. We also have a laugh or two while getting this work done because enjoyment is essential to keeping hope alive!

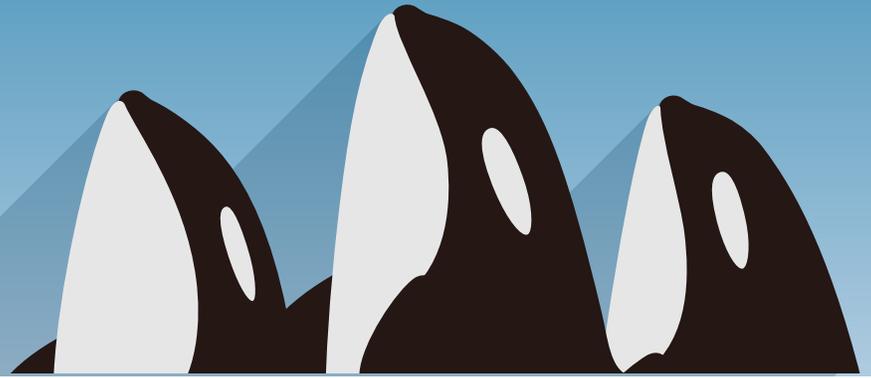
In the pages that follow, you'll see how during the winter and spring, we've been gathering together in person and online to celebrate and to defend our waters from imminent

and present threats. Our ability to bring people together—across sectors and life experiences—is what makes GSA not only special but effective. We know that to make systemic change, we need to get to the heart of the problem. To do that, we must work together.

I hope you will read these stories with a certain amount of pride, as it is your support that has made them possible. You are part of our community, and we hope that you'll continue to gather with us, whether in person or online, to protect the Strait of Georgia and the entire Salish Sea so that our children can continue to gather safely on its shores.



# MOVING MOUNTAINS



## TO DEFEND OUR COAST

Georgia Strait Alliance's advocacy work was timely, coordinated, strong and effective these past several months, with a focus on protecting the remaining 76 [southern resident orcas](#). Collectively, if we protect the Strait, we are protecting the orca from the host of risks associated with increased tanker traffic.

### KINDER MORGAN JUMPS PERMITS

When Texas oil company Kinder Morgan illegally installed seven mats in BC rivers, with the intent of deterring chinook salmon from spawning, we took action. Georgia Strait Alliance motivated more than 2,700 supporters, just like you, to ask the Province for an independent review of the matter because the corporation lacked both permits and authorization.

The matter was assigned to the BC Oil and Gas Commission, and a report is pending.

Georgia Strait Alliance has met with Environment and Climate Change Minister George Heyman on multiple occasions, ensuring that our supporters' strong opposition to the Trans Mountain project—as well as the reasons why—is heard and understood.



photo: Katie Perfitt

**#StopKM**

*Chinook salmon like those affected by Kinder Morgan's anti-spawning mats is the primary food for the endangered southern resident orcas*



## Learn More about southern resident orcas

[www.georgiastrait.org/OrcaProtection](http://www.georgiastrait.org/OrcaProtection)

## ORCA PETITION

Georgia Strait Alliance, in collaboration with five other conservation groups, has formally petitioned the federal ministers of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment and Climate Change, urging them to use their executive powers to protect Southern Resident orca whales.

Specifically, [the petition](#) requested the ministers act in short order to recommend that Cabinet issue an emergency order under the Species at Risk Act, with enforceable action to:

- **Increase** the availability of Chinook salmon
- **Limit** the physical and acoustic disturbance from vessels
- **Complete** the designation and legal protection of orca critical habitat to include more areas critical to the survival of the species

Despite nearly 3,000 GSA supporters adding their voices and names to the petition, the ministers haven't yet made the recommendation. They did indicate their departments are looking into measures that would address threats to these whales. For the latest on federal support for orca protection, please visit [www.georgiastrait.org/OrcaProtection](http://www.georgiastrait.org/OrcaProtection).

**#OrcasCantWait**

*Photo of J-28 (Polaris) in September 2015 with her son, J-54 (Dipper), with noticeable “dents” located on her eyepatch, also referred to as ‘peanut head’. The dents are caused by metabolization of body fat. Her young son also appears to be very thin. Both mother and calf died in October 2016.*



## LET'S GET THE NETS OUT

Partnering with Living Oceans Society, Watershed Watch Salmon Society and others, Georgia Strait Alliance has ramped up its work to advocate for the transition from fish farms to land-based closed containment facilities. Transitioning fish farms to closed-containment facilities is supported by science in order to protect wild salmon, marine mammals and the benthic habitat. Right now, there are 15 Fraser River sockeye populations that the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)—an independent scientific body that advises the federal government—recommend be listed as endangered; threatened, and/or “of special concern”.

In April, all three groups launched [Defend our Salmon – Safe Salmon Declaration](#), asking people in BC to support the removal of fish farms from our waters. The movement amplifies grassroots leaders and voices calling on the governments of British Columbia and Canada to defend, protect, and restore wild Pacific salmon by taking actions to:

- remove existing fish farms where First Nations do not consent to their presence;
- expand the current moratorium on new open net-pen fish farms to cover all BC waters;
- not renew fish farming licenses or tenures
- assess the status of all BC wild salmon populations and their habitats
- implement rebuilding plans for at-risk stocks.

Many thousands of people have signed the Declaration to date, including First Nations Chiefs, scientists, business owners, artists, chefs, and elected municipal leaders.

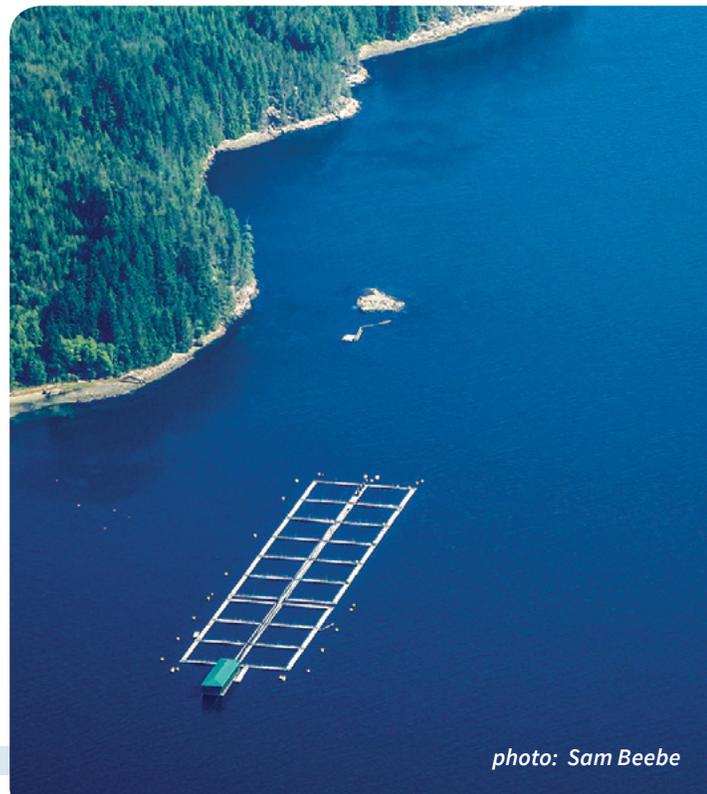
***Washington State legislators will ban commercial net-pen aquaculture when leases expire in 2025***



***Piscine orthoreovirus (PRV) virus, which causes disease in farmed Atlantic salmon, may cause a pathologically different but related disease in Chinook salmon in British Columbia***

**Learn More about the Defend Our Salmon Declaration**

[www.safesalmon.ca](http://www.safesalmon.ca)



# Reasons *to celebrate*

## From Oysters to Orcas

Supporters, like you, tried their hand at shucking oysters with tips from the pros and then dined on a gourmet meal. But there was far more to this evening of seafood and sustenance because supporters learned about sustainable shellfish growing in British Columbia, and how climate change is affecting our local waters.

The festivities for this fundraiser took place at Fanny Bay Oyster Bar and Shellfish Market, which is Vancouver's only tide-to-table oyster bar.

Thanks to the generous [Fanny Bay Oyster Bar](#) and to [Lighthouse Brewing Company](#)—we couldn't have done this without you!



***“We work really hard to make sure the communities that we’re in know the value of good water quality and are able to see that in the product that we farm in the areas.”***

*~Malindi Taylor, Taylor Shellfish, 5th generation shellfish grower*



## Paint Night

At this creative gathering, a local artist guided a group of supporters and their pals through a two-hour painting session in downtown Vancouver. While there was lots of laughter and some glasses of wine, this fundraiser was in support of our orca protection work.



photo: Zoe Greenberg

## Protect the Inlet

Thousands gathered on March 10 for a mass mobilization in Metro Vancouver, led by Tsleil-Waututh members, spiritual leaders, and youth. Over 10,000 people came together to protect our coast, land and climate from Kinder Morgan's dangerous pipeline project.

Standing with Indigenous communities that have been protecting this land since time immemorial, protesters were peaceful but strong in their opposition to a project that would:

- Increase tankers carrying diluted bitumen in the Salish Sea by 700 percent
- Elevate the risk of diluted bitumen spills on land and in the water
- Run through a UNESCO World Heritage site
- Lock Canada into a path of increased climate-destabilizing emissions

*Thank you to our supporters for making the March 10 rally in Burnaby a big, successful, peaceful and respectful demonstration to defend our coast from this dangerous and unnecessary fossil fuel project*



A special thanks to volunteers who called supporters, like you, to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of the event!

# What's the state of Vancouver's WATERFRONT

From Burrard Inlet to the Fraser River, Vancouver's salt and freshwater shorelines span 63 kilometres. However, the stresses on this natural resource are becoming more apparent as the shoreline absorbs increased pollution, population growth, and urbanization, as well as the impacts of rising sea levels and the tensions over land use.

Georgia Strait Alliance set out to create a baseline that could measure the health of Vancouver's waterfront in a way that could be referenced to allow residents and policymakers to understand how the shoreline is evolving. We did this by tracking and analyzing data that considers social, economic and environmental elements in five thematic areas.

We didn't accomplish this alone. We made it happen by mobilizing a network of 200+ waterfront stakeholders into an active network that supported our initiative, and which included all levels of government and First Nations, as well as industry, academia and citizens.

The GSA-led Waterfront Initiative, modelled on New York City's tremendously successful Waterfront Alliance, facilitates conversations and solutions across sectors, focusing on the fact that Vancouver lacks a management plan to maintain, protect and support the evolution of the city's expansive and desirable waterfront.

## We asked ...

- How are competing land uses being balanced?
- Are there initiatives to protect flora, fauna and our waterways from increased noise, light and contamination?
- Is access to the waterfront equitable?
- How is Vancouver preparing to adapt to rising sea levels?
- Are there non-polluting water-based transit options that can be better utilized to ease reliance on commuter vehicles?
- Are there plans to protect existing natural areas and promote biological productivity?

photo: Andriy Baranskyy



## Sustainable shorelines support ecosystems, economies & communities

### Did you know?

- 15% percent of industrial-use land was rezoned for residential/mixed-uses between 1990 and 2016
- Container ship traffic increased 18% between 2008 and 2016
- Average rent on the waterfront increased 27% versus a 17% city-wide increase between 2006 and 2016
- Population living in potentially floodable areas increased 67% between 2006 and 2016, with False Creek and the Fraser River having the largest increases
- Vehicle traffic increased 8% to more than 10,000 vehicles per day on the Second Narrows Bridge between 2007 and 2016
- 30% of the city's shoreline is natural (i.e.) non-heavily-human modified environments

***Learn more and read the report at [www.waterfrontinitiative.org](http://www.waterfrontinitiative.org)***

The official release of the findings brought together Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director of Georgia Strait Alliance; Councillor Andrea Reimer, Chair Policy and Strategic Priorities at City of Vancouver; and Bob Dhaliwal Secretary Treasurer of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada. Also in attendance were Waterfront Initiative participants from the Vancouver Park Board, Tides Canada, SFU, the Musqueam Nation, Real Estate Foundation of BC, among others.





# Partnering to support marine outreach

## WITH KIDS

With the help of a grant from TELUS Victoria Community Board (Victoria), Georgia Strait Alliance created a program that aims to connect youth in Victoria to the Salish Sea. Our species protection coordinator, Rachael Merrett, visited five classrooms, with kids in grades 4 through 8, at two schools, to discuss threats to the health of the marine environment. Rachael challenged the kids to create videos that offer solutions to improve the health of the ocean—and some of these videos were screened at our Festival of Ocean Films, with communities in Victoria and Pender Harbour.



## WITH THE WATERSPORTS COMMUNITY

To help raise awareness about southern resident orcas, and provide the public with tools to take action to protect them, Georgia Strait Alliance was in Vancouver leading talks at Ecomarine Paddlesport and at Vancouver Dive Locker. Local businesses depend on a healthy marine environment and it's a natural fit to partner with them to share messages about the need to protect our waterways and marine habitat with their clientele.

photos: Heather Sandquist and Nicky Newsome, (background) Brenda Garner

## Executive Director gets Women of Distinction nod

The Metro Vancouver YWCA has taken note of the strong and fearless leadership of Christianne Wilhelmson, who for the last eight years has led Georgia Strait Alliance. Christianne has been nominated for a Women of Distinction award for Environmental Sustainability, which recognizes that GSA has thrived under her direction, expanding its reach and the impact of its messages and initiatives that are protecting our local waters and coastal communities.



# COMINGS & GOINGS

## The Georgia Strait Alliance team has grown by four!



We welcome **Anna Barford** to the newly created position of Fossil Fuel Moratorium Community Organizer. Anna, who holds a Master's in Environmental Management and Policy that she earned while living in Sweden, has been active for several years in people-powered campaigns that build communities to take action to stop climate change.



We also welcome **Octavio Cruz** and **Isobel Griffin** as our summer Species Protection Outreach Team! Both Octavio and Isobel have extensive backgrounds in science and environmental history, as well as experience with public outreach and engagement. Keep an eye out for them at events around the South Island and elsewhere this summer!



Welcome also to **Duncan Wlodarczak** to the Board of Directors and also to the Fundraising Committee. Duncan is Chief of Staff at Onni Group of Companies, and Vice-Chair of the Urban Land Institute. He holds a Master of Urban Studies.

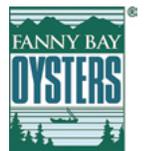
We say goodbye to Board member **David Isaac**. We've enjoyed working together—and look forward to our paths crossing again soon!



Find us on social media

@GeorgiaStraitBC

## Thank you to some of our recent funders and partners...



We would also like to thank—VanCity Mount Tolmie Community Branch, and Dolphin Insurance Services Inc., Employment and Social Development Canada and we acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

# YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!

**Georgia Strait Alliance is proud of our recent accomplishments, which are possible because of your support, and the support of special people like monthly donor Susan Fletcher.**

*"I've been a monthly donor to Georgia Strait Alliance for some 20 years and I continue to donate because it's a really good organization; it helps a lot of people and animals. And the work GSA does on moorages, green boating and marine protected areas is excellent.*

*For most of my lifetime, I've lived near the Strait of Georgia. I grew up in Lantzville and was so lucky to live next to the ocean. My family had an old rowboat we used for fishing and, one time, while we were in the middle of Nanoose Bay, two killer whales emerged nearby. Moments later we felt a bump under the boat!*

*I used to watch fishing boats come into the Bay, but after warships and submarines started using it to anchor, garbage was washed ashore and most fishing boats stayed away.*

*But mostly I delighted in the sights and sounds of ocean wildlife—seagulls, starfish, barnacles and crab... it makes me emotional just thinking about it."*

- Susan Fletcher, monthly donor



## A little goes a long way!

**Our 388 monthly donors gave a cumulative total of more than \$63,000 last year. To learn more about monthly giving, please visit [www.georgiastrait.org/donate](http://www.georgiastrait.org/donate) and check recurring donation.**

## Join Us!

Your tax deductible donation to Georgia Strait Alliance is an investment in our shared vision for our local waters, for today and future generations.

To donate today, call 250-753-3459, email [gsa@GeorgiaStrait.org](mailto:gsa@GeorgiaStrait.org) or visit

[www.georgiastrait.org/donate](http://www.georgiastrait.org/donate)

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photo: Peter Davis-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service