



Georgia Strait Alliance

# WINTER NEWSLETTER

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

2022

## Collective action to protect the Salish Sea

It's been such a thrill to be reconnecting with communities after so long, as well as starting to get to know new ones, and having great conversations about issues and solutions that originate with the people who live there.

We've also been busy working to mitigate pollution and other threats in marine and fresh waters, with a particular focus on issues that include fish farming, boater awareness, protecting orcas, and fighting climate change.

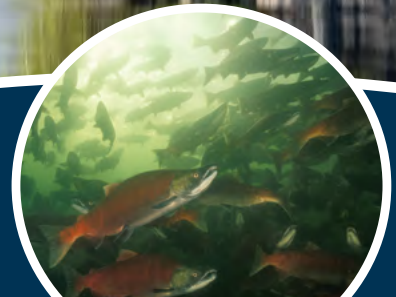
**All of this is possible because of your support, which lets us take action, locally, and have an impact that benefits the entire Salish Sea.**



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# Time for communities to lead

by Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director

In the introduction to the 2021 State of the Salish Sea Report, there is an acknowledgment of all the policies, agreements, and regulations that have been put into place over time and then it quotes the 2010 Coast Salish Gathering Treatise. It says; “Would the Salish Sea be in the state [it’s] in if, in fact, these agreements were doing what they intended to do?”

## Our collective approach to protecting this region isn’t working.

From the perspective of Georgia Strait Alliance, we’ve spent the last six months re-examining not only what issues and threats we are choosing to focus on, but also how we are going about building our campaigns and programs. Though we have had impactful wins over the years, the report makes clear that the fundamental threats to the region – pollution, habitat loss and climate change – haven’t changed in 30 years and, in the case of climate change, the situation has gotten worse.

You’ll see in these pages a peek into what will be increasingly a focus of our organization – supporting local efforts that can disrupt the systems (read: colonial governments and industry) that are impeding effective action to protect these transboundary waters.

## If governments won’t lead, communities will.

In that vein, our community organizing team made significant movement this summer in building new relationships within communities. You will see the impacts of this investment in strengthening and expanding relationships and listening to what issues people care about when you read about the big win we had in the Sue Big Oil Campaign, partnering with West Coast Environmental Law. Our governments have not taken the needed action to address the climate crisis and municipalities are bearing the brunt. By mobilizing and supporting community-led action to demand that Big Oil pay for the impact of their products, we will continue to focus our efforts locally to tackle the impacts of climate change.

It is these kinds of actions that we need to take in increasing number to create a disruption in the “laissez-faire” approach to what threatens this region.

Thanks for your passionate support of our effort to create a better future for the Salish Sea and its communities.



# DEEPENING community connections

Last year, we went back into communities to reconnect with folks. We talked about the many things we’re working on, and built and rebuilt connections. Even though we made it a priority, we still could not be in as many places as we wanted, so this summer we supercharged our capacity! Karina, Alejandro, Brandon, and Selina joined us as Community Organizing Assistants, and brought a fresh and dynamic energy to our team that we are still carrying with us today. (Read more on page 11 in the ‘Comings & Goings’ section).

These youths, whose positions were supported by funding from Canada Summer Jobs, joined us to develop their skills in organizing, outreach, research and planning, and thanks to their wonderful initiative, we were able to attend many events and public spaces across unceded Indigenous territories in East Vancouver, Richmond, Nanaimo and West Vancouver.

We were also able to get our Extreme Heat Project (code name for now!) started thanks to the increased capacity these youths brought, visiting neighbourhoods across these four communities, listening to local concerns and sharing information.



At GSA, we’re working on impactful initiatives where environmental issues intersect with social ones as we move toward contributing to more just communities that live in balance with the environment.

# Too much heat

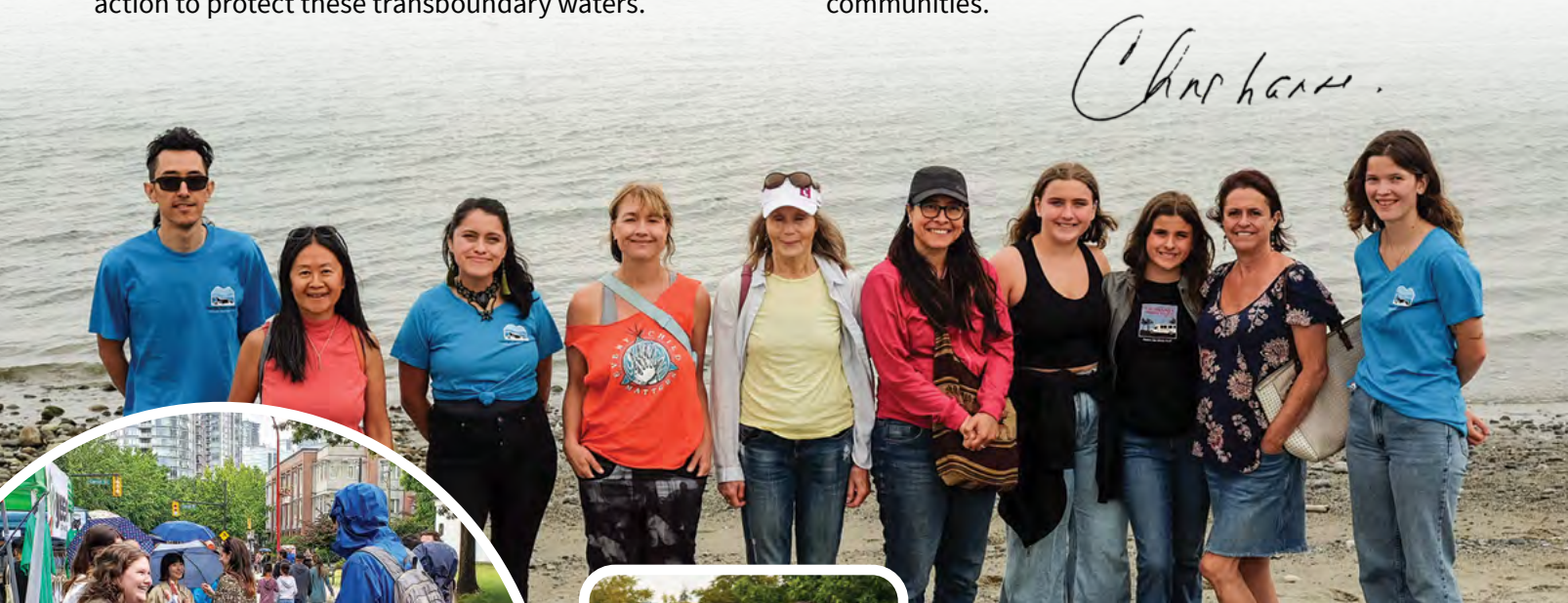


More and more, the idyllic moments of life, like sunny summers full of fresh food and exploring the outdoors are being overshadowed by extreme and unpredictable weather.

This is a dire situation that affects us and all life in our region, and it’s the reason we’ve launched an **Extreme Heat Project**. We began this project over the summer, with door-knocking in specific communities that have been directly affected by extreme heat to gain a better understanding of how people are being affected, what concerns they have, and who is responsible.

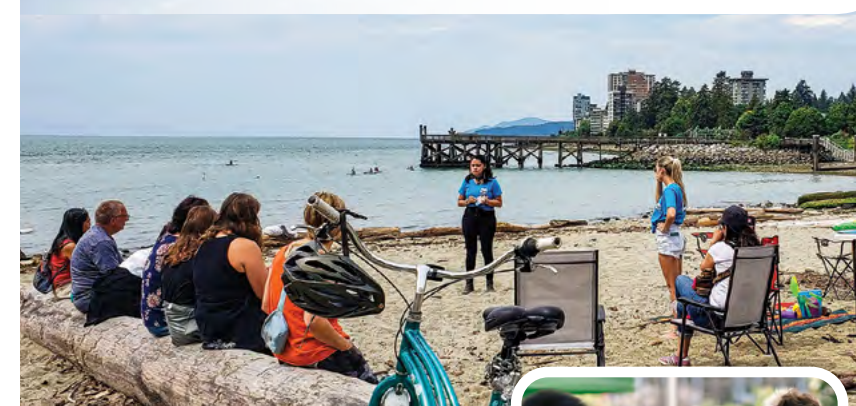
By being on the ground and connecting through real conversations with people, we’re hoping to establish dialogues about the solutions needed, and work together to achieve and implement them. The project also seeks to complement and partner with other efforts, such as the Sue Big Oil campaign, but centres community members’ opinions and feedback.

After all, who knows a community better and what will work for it than the people who live there?



## A summer of connecting with communities.

Direct left: Selina Del Vasto, Community Organizing Assistant; and Lucero González Ruiz, Biodiversity Campaigner.



Far right: Community Organizing Assistants Karina Valcke-Beckett, Alejandro Lazzari and Brandon Charnley.





# CLIMATE & ENERGY

## Big Oil knew and lied

Sue Big Oil, a campaign that calls on B.C.’s local governments to fund a class action lawsuit against global fossil fuel companies, achieved an important climate milestone: the City of Vancouver’s support.

The City of Vancouver voted during the summer to allocate \$1 per resident in its budget to hold global oil and gas corporations to account for the harm caused by their fossil fuel products.

For decades, Big Oil has been selling products they know cause heat waves, floods, and fires and other climate chaos, including the loss of lives. More than 600 people in B.C. died during the extreme heat of the summer of 2021.

At GSA, we’re part of creating Sue Big Oil because we want people across the Province to ask their city councils about how they are planning to help communities to pay for the increasing costs of infrastructure damage from climate change and how they’re going to cover the costs to prepare for a destabilized climate.

Let your elected officials know that you expect them to protect you, your community and the planet from the impacts—and costs—of climate change.



Photo: Gil Aguilar



Photo: David Niddrie, flickr

### Vancouver is the first municipality in Canada to demand that Big Oil pay their fair share.

Oil and gas corporations must pay their fair share for the harm they’re causing. The City of Vancouver’s support is a vote to seek justice and put the climate first and to build more equitable and sustainable communities that put people and the planet before corporate profits.

**Almost 80% of global emissions from human sources are from burning fossil fuels and industrial processes.**

## The Environmental Movement & UNDRIP

The **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to their territories and lands, and the right to protect them. Indigenous peoples in Canada play an essential role in climate change mitigation and environmental protection and should lead on the environmental management of their territories. For more on UNDRIP, including what it is and how it relates to the environmental movement, visit our website blog.

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

### Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #43 and municipalities around the Salish Sea

In September, we contacted a handful of municipalities in the regional area where our staff, board and volunteers live and where our work takes place – on the unceded territories of many Coast Salish Nations – regarding implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #43.

It calls on municipal governments, as well as provincial and federal ones, to fully adopt and implement the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** as the framework for reconciliation.

We were looking to learn which municipalities in the region have adopted it, and we connected with some for an update on their progress on fully adopting UNDRIP, endorsed 12 years ago by Canada.

We will continue to encourage municipalities in the region to take meaningful action, and to prioritize bringing this initiative forward as an action their communities can do to affirm the human rights of Coast Salish peoples and their right to self determination.

#### Call to Action #43

Calls on the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation



We live and work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

Photo: Sara Agnew



# BIODIVERSITY

## Delays to phasing out fish farms in Discovery Islands

The year-long legal battle to uphold the decision by former Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Minister, Bernadette Jordan, to phase out salmon farms in B.C.'s Discovery Islands by June 2022 – which GSA and our allies supported, with legal representation by Ecojustice – had a disappointing conclusion, but it's not over yet!

The federal judicial review regarding Jordan's order in the Discovery Islands – which was challenged by the aquaculture industry – resulted in a verdict to set aside the decision to phase-out the 19 farms in the area because proper procedures weren't followed.

The silver lining is that the ruling was largely made on procedural grounds. This means there is nothing in this ruling about the basis for the phase-out decision itself, but that the Minister must further explain the reasoning for her decision.



Photo: David Stanley, flickr

**At GSA, we are deeply troubled that a Federal Court has put a hold on an environmental decision, despite the decision being informed by social and traditional knowledge of several Indigenous nations in the Discovery Islands, their rights and title, as well as the science that shows wild Pacific salmon are in a deep state of emergency.**

## Protect the oceans from cruise ship pollution

Cruise ships have returned to local ports and with them, a huge amount of toxic pollution that these floating cities release into the local marine environment. The ocean is on the hook to absorb their sewage, greywater, and acidic fossil fuel waste – and also their noise which threatens Southern Resident orcas.

The return of cruise ships to this region shouldn't threaten the well-being of coastal waters and those who depend on them. Together, let's strengthen marine regulations for cruise ships.

## GET THE NETS OUT!

At GSA, we're advocating that any in-water technologies cease to be included in transition plans for the salmon aquaculture industry. These fail to address many of the threats to wild salmon currently caused by the industry, including dumping their waste into the ocean at the expense of wild salmon. They are not the timely solution that is needed.

Getting the nets completely out of the marine environment is one of the most effective ways to support a salmon revival in the near-term.

## The 2022 deadline for aquaculture licences

In June 2022, the licences for 79 marine salmon aquaculture facilities in B.C. were set to expire. Unfortunately, DFO Minister Murray granted two-year licence renewals for those fish farms, but the decision doesn't apply to the 19 in the Discovery Islands. (Because of the Minister's decision, explained to the left, the future of the Discovery Islands' farms will be decided next year, following another round of consultations with First Nations in the area, industry and stakeholders.)

The impact of the renewal is that wild salmon, which are already in a state of emergency, will continue to be exposed to harmful pathogens and disease produced by open-net pen fish farms for another two years.

Initially, we had considered that the length of the licence renewals – two years – was an indication that the Minister was putting industry on notice that a transition to land-based facilities was imminent and was in line with the government's commitment to get the nets out of the ocean by 2025.

**But then we received DFO's framework for a transition plan . . .**



### A surprising transition framework

DFO released its discussion framework in September, outlining the next phase in the transition plan away from open-net pen fish farms in B.C. The biggest omission was the reaffirmation that the nets will be physically and entirely out of the waters by 2025, as pledged.

This was also the case with the public consultation about the framework, launched in September. This continued to give prominence to hybrid in-water technologies that do not protect wild salmon because they do not fully remove the pollution, disease or waste from the marine environment.

## Southern Resident Orca Population 2022

# 73

J Pod = 25   K Pod = 16   L Pod = 32

There are 73 orcas in the population, including two possible deaths and two calves born in 2022. The deaths are K-44 (11 years old and the second youngest member of K pod after the new calf) and L-89 (29 years old).

Photo: Miles Ritter, flickr





## Prize Raffle

Wow, we are overwhelmed with the success of our first online raffle to benefit marine conservation and climate action! Thanks to supporters like you, we raised \$19,900 – only \$100 short of our stretch goal!

We couldn't have done it without the support of the incredible prize sponsors and donors, whose generosity made this a tremendous success for GSA. What a great way to celebrate the Summer of the Salish Sea!

### Our fabulous prizes were:

- ★ A Gazelle Medeo T9 City electric bike, donated by Citrus Cycles and an anonymous donor
- ★ An inflatable 10'6" Stand Up Paddle Board (iSUP) and accessory kit from Premier Paddle Boards.
- ★ A one-night getaway in Sechelt at Tuwanek Hotel and Spa.
- ★ A membership to the fair trade and sustainable fishery Skipper Otto.
- ★ A luxurious beachfront getaway at The Beach Club Resort in Parksville.
- ★ A merino wool and recycled cashmere blend Fisherman's sweater and a blanket by Anián.
- ★ A stained glass whale by Tammy Hudgeon Glassworks.

Congratulations to **Gina Lazarowich**, a Bowen Island resident and a long-time environmentalist and social justice documentary maker. **Enjoy your new e-bike!**



## SUPERSTAR volunteer



### Meet Ambre Comeau!

Volunteers, like Ambre, are the heart of GSA because they extend the impact of our initiatives. Ambre grew up in Nova Scotia, and lived for years in Calgary, which is where she first learned about GSA and became a monthly donor from afar. It wasn't until this year, when she relocated to B.C. to attend BCIT's Fish, Wildlife and Recreation program that she became a GSA volunteer – and we're so happy to have her!

### Volunteer with us!

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

## You're invited!

The Festival of Ocean Films is taking place this February. We're so excited to be gathering together – in person and online – to share filmmakers' stories about oceans and marine protection initiatives that inspire deep reflections on the relationships we each hold with the ocean.

This year, we're expanding the reach of our Festival of Ocean Films by partnering with IMPAC5 – an International Marine Protected Areas Conference taking place February 3 – 9, 2023 in Vancouver.

Visit our website often for new details.

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



## WILL POWER: Keep the love going

GSA has joined Will Power, a national initiative to encourage more people to consider including a gift to charity in their wills. A will can be a powerful agent that supports change in the world, while also supporting those you love. A donation of as little as one percent of your estate can result in a bigger contribution than you ever thought possible; it's about giving in a different way.

Visit our website to read about harnessing the power of your will.

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

I love my granddaughter.  
I also love the environment.  
I am remembering both.



Use the power of your will to do more.

 **WILL  
POWER**





## Return of the Dock Walkers!

We re-launched the Dock Walking Program over the summer, with support from some fabulous volunteers. This people-powered initiative is about having conversations with recreational boaters about some of the most important ways they can be stewards of healthy local waters.



Mitchell O'Brien, our Clean Marine BC Assistant, dock walks with a Clean Boater Kit at False Creek Fishermen's Wharf. Photo: Michelle Young.

**250 Clean Boater Kits have been distributed in the Lower Mainland, Kelowna, the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island, and include:**

- ✓ GSA's Guide to Green Boating
- ✓ Spills Aren't Slick: brochure and sticker
- ✓ Overview of 2022 management measures to protect Southern Resident Killer Whales, and a range finder to determine if you're far enough away from whales
- ✓ Aquatic Invasive Species wallet card
- ✓ Three types of spill supplies: (a) a fuel bib to prevent drips while fueling, (b) a bilge sock to absorb any hydrocarbons in the bilge to avoid pumping contaminants into the water, and (c) a general use spill pad
- ✓ And more!

## COMINGS & GOINGS

It was incredible having new GSA-ers on the team during the summer months. It meant that we were able to participate in more community events across the region.

**Karina Valcke-Beckett, Brandon Charnley, Selina Del Vasto and Alejandro Lazzari** (see their photographs on page 3) brought their passion, enthusiasm and skills to their positions as Community Organizing Assistants. Working alongside GSA staffers Dana Taylor and Gil Aguilar, this team was focussed on community initiatives in the federal ridings of Vancouver East, Richmond, West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky, and Nanaimo—Ladysmith.



**Han Xing** joined as Orca Action Month Assistant and ensured that our multiple events and webinars went smoothly and he kept supporters, like you, informed and visually engaged on social media.



We're also happy to welcome **Ellie Blackmore**. She is leading our Festival of Oceans Films this year as we partner with IMPAC5 – an International Marine Protected Areas Congress taking place February 3 – 9, 2023 in Vancouver.



After four and a half years as our Development Associate, we bid a warm farewell to **Coralie Charland** and thank her for all of her incredible work as we wish her success in her newest adventure.



We also say our goodbyes to Board member **Charlotte Fox**, who served a three-year term, including nearly two years as Secretary, and was a valuable asset to the organization's Fundraising Committee and in supporting our work to advance Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

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



We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

**Clean Marine BC** is our eco-certification program that supports boating facilities to reduce the impact of recreational boating and their operations on the Salish Sea and beyond, and recognizes them for their efforts.

## Newest certifications



Congratulations to the **Oak Bay Marine Group** for certifying all four of its marinas in Clean Marine BC. In terms of impact, there are now a total of 1,758 moorage slips in their facilities that are dedicated to sustainable development and energy conservation across operations. Their facilities are: **Ladysmith Marina, North Saanich Marina, Pedder Bay RV Resort & Marina and the Oak Bay Marina.**



Congratulations also to **Salt Spring Island Harbour Authority** for certification of all eight of their facilities around the Island!



**Quayside Marina** in Vancouver's False Creek and North Vancouver's **Lions Gate Marine Centre** have both recertified and increased their anchor ratings to the highest achievable!

## Reflecting on the future

The pandemic brought a lot of changes to communities around the Salish Sea, as well as to GSA itself – and we felt that now is the right time to do a deep dive into our strategic plan for the first time in nearly 10 years. The new plan is being created collaboratively with staff and the board, and has included input from the broader GSA community through surveys and interviews that we conducted during the summer. We're very excited about the conversations we're having about the best approaches to take in the next three years, as we recommit to building a healthy future for the Salish Sea region through community engagement and grounded in environmental justice.

We look forward to soon sharing with you more about our new strategic plan, as well as our refreshed mission and vision.





# In the Community

The days are getting shorter and darker, but let's remember all the sunshine and the extended daylight hours we enjoyed over the summer – and what a summer it was for GSA!

We kicked our outreach activities into high gear in June by celebrating Orca Action Month, with local partners from Parks Canada, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, Oceans Initiatives, The Whale Trail and SeaFlora Skincare, as well as with others in Washington State and Oregon.

Orca lovers came together to learn, connect, dialogue and discover ways that we can each have stronger roles in the protection and recovery of the majestic – and endangered – Southern Resident orcas, and about the interconnections between species protection and the climate justice movement.

We enjoyed being in communities as much as we could. It was a pleasure to converse with people at festivals, markets, beach events and online!



Do you want the latest on orcas and how to take action to protect them delivered to your inbox? It's easy and free.

**Join our Orca Action Team!**

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



**Become a monthly donor today  
and make a difference all year round!**

Your tax deductible donation is an investment in the protection of the Salish Sea, and all the creatures that call it home.

**Donate today**

 250-753-3459

 [giving@GeorgiaStrait.org](mailto:giving@GeorgiaStrait.org)

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

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