

Georgia Strait Alliance

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

www.GeorgiaStrait.org

2023

Grassroots Action for Orcas

Lucero González Ruiz, who leads our biodiversity initiatives, used to be afraid of the ocean. She stumbled into what she refers to as her destiny – protecting the ocean – after casually signing up for a few courses at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. At the time, her only objective was to obtain a few university credits.

“The West Coast and its magnificence really affected me. I left those courses loving the ocean,” Lucero says. “I’m thankful to these lands because they not only healed the relationship that I have with the ocean but also with my Indigenous roots.”

Turning her thoughts to orcas, a whale she has yet to see in the wild, Lucero is cautiously hopeful about the species’ recovery. “I wouldn’t be doing this work otherwise. Nature shows us over and over that it is resilient. Orcas have survived so many things, but there’s not a lot of time left to give them the space they need to recover,” she says. And she makes specific reference to the federal government’s recent approval of the Roberts Bank Terminal 2, a mega marine infrastructure project in the delicate Fraser River estuary.

Story continued on page 2



“Nature shows us over and over that it is resilient.”



We acknowledge with respect the Coast Salish peoples on whose traditional, ancestral and unceded territories we live and work, and recognize that this land was never surrendered, relinquished or handed over in any way.



Explore the Salish Sea Prize Raffle!

Enter now for your chance to win one of 8 exciting prize packages, totaling \$8000!

Tickets on sale until Oct 5th!

gsa.rafflenexus.com

Message from Executive Director Christianne Wilhelmson

Last fall, I shared how our team had spent time assessing the effectiveness of our programs, recognizing that our existing approach to protecting this region wasn't working for everyone. From this assessment came our commitment to doing things differently going forward: to building our campaigns from the ground up, starting with communities.

Going forward, we're focused on listening to and working with individuals and groups throughout the region so we can be more inclusive, intentional and impactful in addressing threats to the Salish Sea. We also recommitted to a part of our mission that had always been there, but which today is more essential to our work: to protect communities. The pandemic revealed the cracks in our society – loneliness is at a crisis level,



social and racial inequity are pervasive, and socio-economic inequality is rampant.

Protecting the environment is not solely about addressing ecological threats, but understanding the systemic conditions that underpin and, at times, are at the root of the threats that cause habitat degradation and climate change. The harms of colonialism reverberate in our society today, and decisions about developments and ecological protection are still too often made to the exclusion of many in society. The UN has recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. And environmental justice expands that further to include equal protection from environmental harm.

When a wastewater treatment plant is built near First Nations reserves or when polluting industries are built in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, that is environmental injustice. It must stop if we are to ensure everyone benefits from a healthy environment and can be a part of finding solutions to these and other threats.

To make meaningful change in the health of the Salish Sea, we must centre justice in all our work. And going forward, we will do just that.

OUR NEW MISSION

Grounded in environmental justice, we mobilize and support collective action to protect the Salish Sea region.

georgiastrait.org/AboutUs

Message from Board Chair Kristin Street

Over a year ago, as part of the organization's work to examine its programs and internal processes through an equity lens, it felt right for the Board to examine the role we played in upholding systems of inequity and re-imagine how we could support GSA's revitalized direction. We knew we had to look closely at how the board functioned so that we could more authentically advance the vision, mission and values of the organization.

This last year got us to challenge what

a board looks like when it moves away from traditional power dynamics, and we laid out what steps we could take to intentionally live our values and grow our Board. We are excited to be entering a new recruitment phase, one which centres equity and continually challenges our cultural norms as a predominantly white board.

We definitely don't have all the answers, but we are excited about our next chapter in supporting GSA's new mission.



...Grassroots Action continued

Reflecting on what orcas mean to her, Lucero talks about how everything is interconnected and reflects on the social characteristics that humans share with Southern Resident orcas.

"Being a matriarchal society really speaks to me. It's the matriarchs in my family who have made me the person who I am today. They've given me everything that I need to do this work: they've taught me compassion and patience and love."

At GSA, Lucero is focussing the orca protection campaign on grassroots action. She's addressing the lack of youth voices in policy development as these spaces are often inaccessible, particularly for BIPOC youth, but they're spaces where GSA is at the table.

"Change needs to be intergenerational, but right now we're not seeing youth representation, especially in policy spaces."

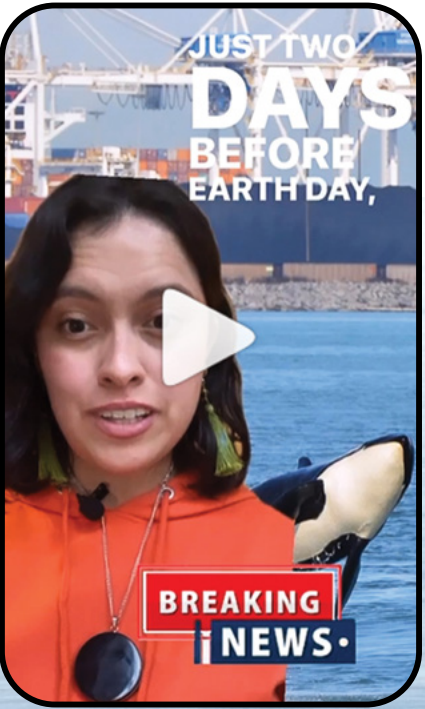
Lucero stresses the need for a different system, where folks on the ground are leading the change, have the tools they need, and can go beyond government-made spaces.

"There are so many ways to connect with orcas. You don't need to be on the water with them. You can watch whales from land and listen to their calls from your own home," Lucero says, offering a reminder that it's important for people to know the marine mammal regulations even if they are only watching from land. She also encourages everyone to report sightings and violations of boats getting too close to orcas.



Lucero helping to deliver a petition, signed by 50,000+ people, to the government. It demands cruise ships stop dumping untreated waste into the ocean.

Image: Stand.earth



Watch this video and more on Instagram @GeorgiaStraitBC



Do you want to know the latest on orcas and ways to take action to protect them?

Join our Orca Action Team!
georgiastrait.org/OrcaActionTeam

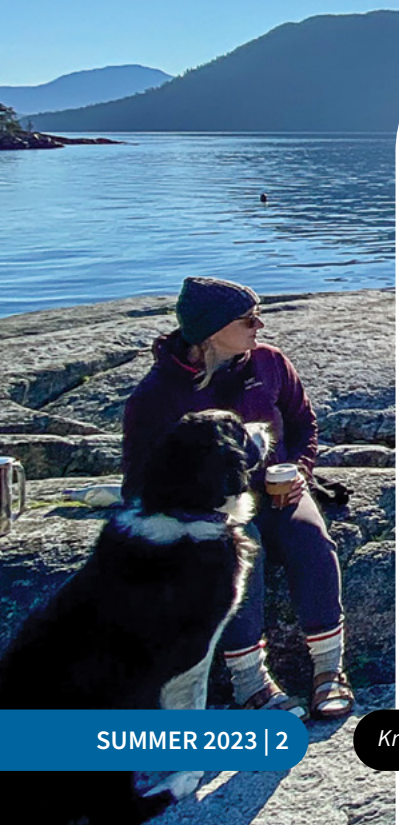




Image: Fernando Lessa

BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

Continually putting the economy above the environment is the reason we're experiencing such alarming biodiversity loss and impacts from climate change.

MARINE PLANNING

In February, Executive Director Christianne Wilhelmsen and Biodiversity Campaigner Lucero González Ruiz connected with people from around the world who are working to protect the ocean at IMPAC5: the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress.

Notable announcements at the Congress included:

- A moratorium on deep sea mining.
- An updated policy on National Marine Conservation Areas.
- A Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan for the Northern Shelf Bioregion of British Columbia, known as the Great Bear Sea. This initiative is led by 15 Coastal First Nations, along with the Province of B.C., and Canada.

georgiastrait.org/MarinePlanning

Mega marine project approved

Disappointed doesn't even begin to describe how we feel about the federal government's approval of Roberts Bank Terminal 2 on the Fraser River estuary in Delta. The irreversible adverse effects of the project on the 73 endangered Southern Resident orcas left in the wild have somehow been deemed "justifiable."

The federal government's own Independent Review Panel found that this mega project will – without a doubt – further endanger this highly biodiverse habitat where there are already 102 species at risk, including orcas, salmon and birds. Minister Guilbeault recently said that humans modifying the natural

habitat is the biggest pressure responsible for global biodiversity loss.

This project will further the unprecedented biodiversity crisis, while increasing vessel activity, underwater noise, climate destabilization, and the risk of oil spills.

With our legal partner, Ecojustice, and other organizations, we've requested a judicial review in the Federal Court. We hope to argue the decision is unlawful because it goes against the Species at Risk Act

The Salish Sea needs a comprehensive vision and action plan for its protection.

georgiastrait.org/RBT2

A huge win: the nets are out

Let's celebrate victories, especially when they're as huge as the eviction of fish farms from the Discovery Islands! For the first time in decades, out-migrating wild salmon will be free from the parasites and disease that seep through the open-net pens that have housed infected Atlantic salmon for decades.

Getting these nets out was possible only with the leadership and stewardship of local First Nations, who were heard and respected by Minister Murray. The Minister also cited her reliance on science and the precautionary approach that points to open-net fish farms as a threat to the vulnerable health of wild Pacific salmon.

georgiastrait.org/GetTheNetsOut



CLIMATE ACTION

Right now, we're on the ground in several coastal communities on the Mainland and also on Vancouver Island. We're knocking on residents' doors and having conversations about how extreme weather events, exacerbated by the changing climate, are affecting them.

Climate change is here in the Salish Sea and communities are feeling

the effects. At GSA, we're trying to gain a better understanding of the impacts of these weather events, what concerns are arising, and where there are gaps leading to needs not being met. After all, it is the people who live here who know this best, and they are the ones who understand what types of initiatives will – or won't – work in their communities.

georgiastrait.org/ExtremeWeatherProject



We've been busy bringing people together to support them with building the tools and campaign know-how to create coordinated and community-powered advocacy initiatives across the region. Our recent focus has been on facilitating and training groups of coastal residents to engage and mobilize for climate action around the Salish Sea, with a focus on enhancing local capacity and equity-centered relationship building.




CLEAN MARINE BC



Congratulations to these Clean Marine BC marinas:

 **Anglers Anchorage Marina** achieved its first certification.

 **Kelowna Yacht Club** is the first freshwater marina in the province to achieve a five-anchor rating.

Wow! Our virtual spill training session, hosted by our Clean Marine BC program, sold out! Unfamiliar with our spill training workshops? Visit us online for a testimonial from someone who has taken it three times, and considers it an invaluable prevention tool for his facility.

georgiastrait.org/CMBCspillTraining

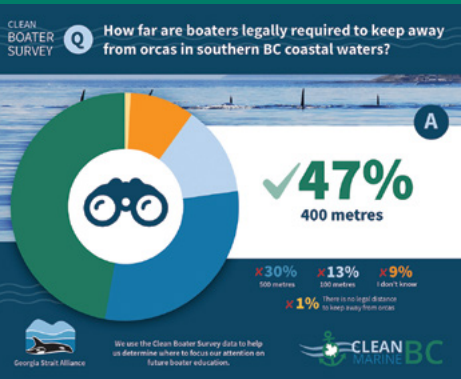
Clean Boater Survey

Nearly 200 recreational boaters participated in a survey to test their knowledge about clean and safe boating.

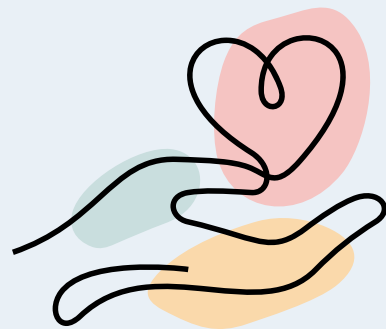
The results surprised us in good, and not-so-good, ways.

Find out how:

georgiastrait.org/BoaterSurvey



Kelowna Yacht Club. Image: Shawn Talbot



Think differently about giving

More and more people are deciding to contribute to causes that matter to them by including a gift to charity in their Will. A legacy gift ensures that our work to protect the Salish Sea lasts beyond your lifetime, without requiring any of the money that you need now.

Leaving one percent of your estate can result in a significant contribution to a cause or organization, while ensuring the rest makes it to family and friends. And, of course, there are tax and other financial strategies that can be used to ensure that your giving works for you today and into the future, as well as for those who receive your inheritance.

Bill S., a 72-year-old supporter of GSA, has included the organization in his will, saying:

"I decided to select four or five environmental NGOs that I know are doing effective work and deserve support. GSA happens to be working in an area that is dear to me - the Salish Sea - so it was an easy choice. The Southern Gulf Islands have been a welcome refuge for my wife and I for the better part of four decades and we are fortunate to live there now.

"From focused actions like the Clean Marine BC green boating program to broader issues such as marine traffic and climate action, the leaders at GSA continue to demonstrate their commitment to the Salish Sea.

"While I would prefer to increase my support during my lifetime, there are many competing demands for limited funds, and so including GSA in my will was the next best option. The challenges facing the Salish Sea are long-term issues, and I am confident that GSA will be there for years to come leading the defence of this important ecosystem."

Calculate your potential gift
georgiastrait.org/WillPower

Image: David Hutchison, adobestock

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

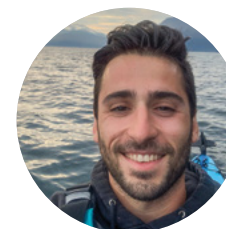
georgiastrait.org/donate

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

COMINGS & GOINGS



Alaya Seoudy has joined our team as Data and Donor Services Assistant, bringing with her experience gained as a Programme Manager for a UK-based social justice charity. She provides support for our fundraising, data systems and administration, and is the initial point-of-contact for public and donor inquiries.



Jacob Banting has joined as Clean Marine BC Coordinator, after managing a Clean Marine Certified non-profit harbour authority on the Sunshine Coast for three years. He is leading our marina eco-certification and clean boating program, facilitating spill response training, and clean boating outreach. Jacob takes over from long-time coordinator **Michelle Young**, who has expanded her finance role to encompass operations.



Thank you to **Mitchell O'Brien** for his work as Clean Marine BC Assistant. We appreciate his time and expertise in the development and testing of Clean Marine BC's online platform and for connecting with marinas and boaters for the past year and a half.



We bid farewell to **Christopher Hakes** after more than two years on the Board. We thank him for his service and contributions as Vice-President and for his time supporting the development of our new strategic plan.



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



CELEBRATING the Year of the Salish Sea



We can't say it enough: the Salish Sea desperately needs a more collaborative transboundary approach to marine management. A group of youths have been doing amazing work to raise awareness about decreasing jurisdictional silos as the catalyst that can spur real institutional and cultural

change to protect the Salish Sea. We were thrilled that two of the co-founders of this youth-led initiative – known as the Year of the Salish Sea – met with guests at our sixth annual fundraiser, **From Oysters to Orcas**, to discuss their visions for a healthy and sustainable region.



Tasha Romeyn and **Simran Sarai** are two of the co-founders of the **Year of the Salish Sea** that 10 municipalities recognized between June 2022 and June 2023.



Festival of Ocean Films

We were so excited to bring back the **Festival of Ocean Films in February in partnership with IMPAC5**. The Festival had in-person and virtual screenings, offering access to beautiful and motivating films. Theatre attendees conversed with panelists about fisheries and ocean health.

Thank you to everyone who bought tickets. We hope you enjoyed the films, learned something new, felt inspired and perhaps explored your connection to the sea, rivers and other bodies of water.

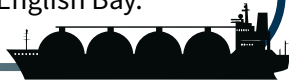


Much gratitude to **Ellie Blackmore** for leading an extremely successful Festival of Oceans Films!

Change is PEOPLE POWERED

For more than nine years, people in the Átl'ka7tsem/ Howe Sound region have delayed a new fossil fuel project. When the project proponent, Woodfibre LNG, took on seals and sea lions, GSA was compelled to mobilize.

Woodfibre LNG is a fracked gas project that plans to liquify natural gas for export, position floating liquified natural gas (LNG) storage tanks in the ocean, and have LNG tankers transiting Howe Sound and bunkering in English Bay.



They have asked the federal regulator to reduce – by 92 percent – the area they're required to mitigate noise for seals and sea lions during construction to only 125m.

Is it acceptable to expose marine mammals to as much underwater noise as a rocket ship launching (that's 190 decibels) during the multi-year construction of Woodfibre LNG? Of course not.

We're proud to have mobilized more than 2000 supporters in only a few days to tell the regulator that if a project is not able to comply with its conditions, then it should not be able to continue.

The stakes are high: Relaxing project conditions because they are hard to achieve or are deemed too expensive by industry has the potential to set a dangerous precedent.

If Woodfibre LNG is granted its request to reduce critical environmental conditions, imagine how many of the 370 conditions that the federal government imposed on the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 project will be challenged? Species at risk across the Salish Sea are relying on organizations like GSA to keep fighting against harmful projects like these.



Take this two-minute survey.
You'll be entered to win a box of locally-made
Denman Island Orca Chocolate bars.



Squamish Paddling Club screened three of the films in our Festival of Ocean Films, including Uncharted Waters that has Squamish roots. Dozens of passionate people gathered for this mini film festival at Galileo Coffee to be inspired – and \$400 in donations for GSA were raised!

Can we work together?

Do you have an idea about how, together, we can support and advocate for a vibrant, healthy and biodiverse Salish Sea?



Image: Larissa Sayer, flickr

