

# **INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM**

**MARCH 30, 2021**



# ATTENDEES

Gordon Elliot, Director of Operations, co-founder W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council  
Adam Olsen, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Saanich North and the Islands  
Elizabeth May, Member of Parliament, Saanich Gulf Islands  
Gary Holman, Salt Spring Island Capital Regional District Director  
Tahirih Rockafella, Galiano Island Trustee  
Jane Wolverton, Galiano Island Trustee  
Deb Morrison, North Pender Island Trustee  
Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island Trustee  
Steve Wright, South Pender Island Trustee  
Paul Brent, Saturna Island Trustee



Tarah Stafford, Facilitator  
Gillian Nicol, Islands Trust Program Coordinator  
Laura Parker, MLA Outreach Coordinator  
Clare Frater, Trust Area Services Director  
Carly Bilney, Islands Trust Minute Taker  
Corrina Keeling, Graphic Recorder  
Alexa Lewis, MP Assistant  
Kate O'Connor, MLA Constituent Assistant

# WELCOME

The Southern Gulf Islands Forum was created for First Nations, Federal, Provincial, Islands Trust, and Capital Regional District (CRD) leadership to gather together, find common ground, build relationships and find a shared story to raise up. MLA Adam Olsen championed this beginning and then turned it over to the group, as a story to be held by all.



## GORDON ELLIOT

Gordon Elliot, WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society, provided an opening reflection – a prayer to give thanks for the day – and shared a story about the Creator who transformed our ancestors into living beings that connect us in different ways. He described the importance of our connection, as current inhabitants of the Southern Gulf Islands, to the Creator and the need to be responsible to our relatives in modern times.

## ADAM OLSEN

Adam Olsen spoke to our collective responsibility to come together and share the important work of looking after this beautiful place – work that was once that of the islands' first inhabitants. He noted this forum marks the beginning of this work and expressed hope that we do our best to live up to the contract we have with the Southern Gulf Islands: that if we look after them, they will look after us. QEN,T TFEN SCÁLEĆE - "You look after your relatives." I, QEN,T SE SW TFEN SCÁLEĆE "And you look after your relatives." He noted that it is our collective burden, and joy, to be the stewards and caretakers of this territory.

WE ARE JUST AS MUCH A PART OF THE ECOSYSTEM AS ANYTHING ELSE.

EVERYONE WHO LIVES HERE NOW SHARES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LOOKING AFTER THE LAND AND THE WATER.

- ADAM OLSEN from Grandma Laura

if you look After THEM, THEY LOOK after you.

STEWARDSHIP IS NOT A BURDEN, it is a GIFT.



WE REGARD THESE LANDS AS OUR ANCESTORS. WE THREW STONES THAT BECAME THE MOUNTAINS, AND THREW WILNEW PEOPLE FROM THE MOUNTAINS INTO THE OCEAN THAT BECAME THE ISLANDS. "LOOK AFTER THE RELATIVES OF THE DEEP."

-GORDON ELLIOT

# COMMUNITY

The group started off the day by talking about their communities; what they loved and the solutions that were needed to make them even better. Commonality flourished, illuminating how, while each attendee came from a different region of the Salish Sea and while each community had different needs and concerns, in the end, it was evident that ‘what unites us is greater than what divides us’. Building strong relationships between the leaders, as well as between the communities themselves, is what will bring this forum success.



## WHAT DO YOU THINK EVERYONE ELSE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY? ARE THERE ANY OBVIOUS OR NON OBVIOUS ASPECTS OTHERS MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT?

We have a population that has rich experiences in their past and current lives around sustainable living, environmental protection, and community collective action.

We also have newer people to the islands that are trying to get away from big city life but are not always aware that island living comes with reduced services and often different value systems.

We have, like all of the islands, qualified volunteers working hard to develop and implement solutions to big issues like climate action and housing insecurity.

We live in a beautiful region with four orders of government. Coordination continues to be challenging in the region. Coordinated advocacy is more effective when communications messaging and approach are aligned.

About half the Island is in park or park reserve status.

We're not North Pender and we don't want to be Salt Spring.

It is diverse! Manufacturing, agricultural, innovative ... mostly well to do - but with real pockets of poverty.

We have a large and growing number of homeless or at risk of homelessness. We have a growing population of people living in boats. We have an overheated real estate market that is putting pressure on further development.

For all of the Gulf Islands, I think the degree of poverty is not understood, the housing crisis is not well-understood.

Likely due to changes in remote working that have occurred due to the pandemic, a significant (for an Island of 400) amount of people have come to live here permanently. New arrivals fit well with our community's increasingly open community vision.

WHAT you LOVE

WE CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER AND the LAND.

EVERY PLACE you GO is UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT and BEAUTIFUL.

WE'RE RESILIENT: DAVID to the GOLIATH of INDUSTRY

RESIDENTS are willing to CARE & TRY

WE'RE GENEROUS: driven by Volunteers

I CAN BE myself HERE

it's HOME.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME



INDIGENOUS LEADING the WAY.

REAL INCLUSION of FIRST NATIONS in DECISIONS

LEADERSHIP FROM ~~INDIVIDUALS~~ COMMUNITY

MOVE FAST to PROTECT the ENVIRONMENT

MORE DIVERSITY: AGE RACE CULTURE

COMMUNICATION that DOES JUSTICE to our CO-OPERATION.

What you'd like to SEE

RECONCILIATION FIRST.

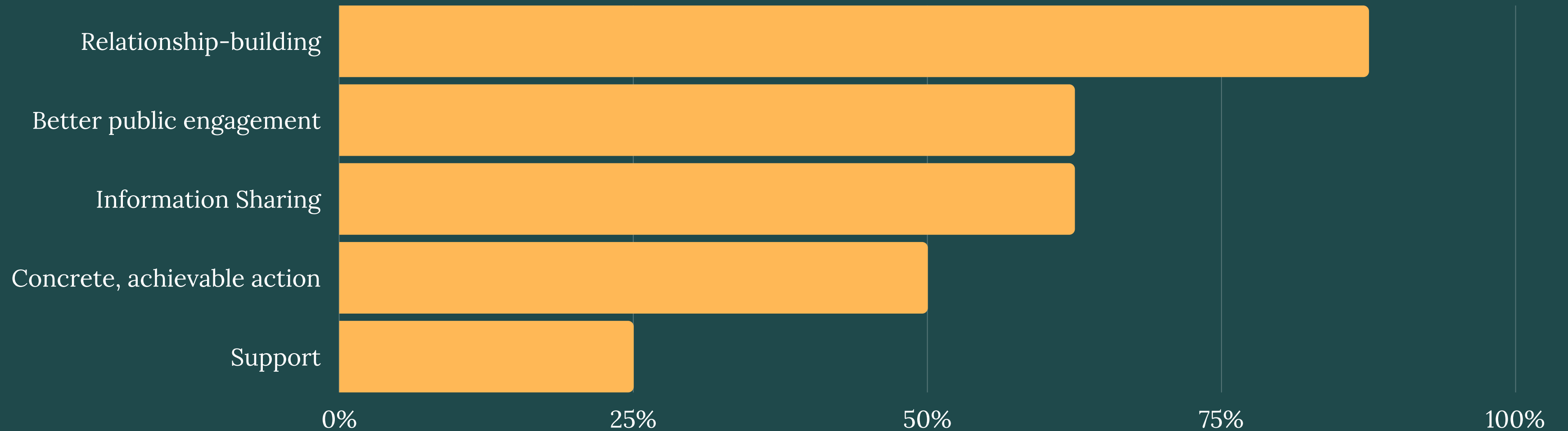
BETTER UNDERSTANDING of TRUE HISTORY

COURAGE to CONFRONT our COLONIAL REALITY.

~~YES/NO~~  
~~BLACK/WHITE~~  
embracing complexity.



# WHAT WORD(S) BEST DESCRIBES WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ACHIEVED BY THE FORUM?





# WHAT DO WE WANT THE SGI FORUM TO ACHIEVE?



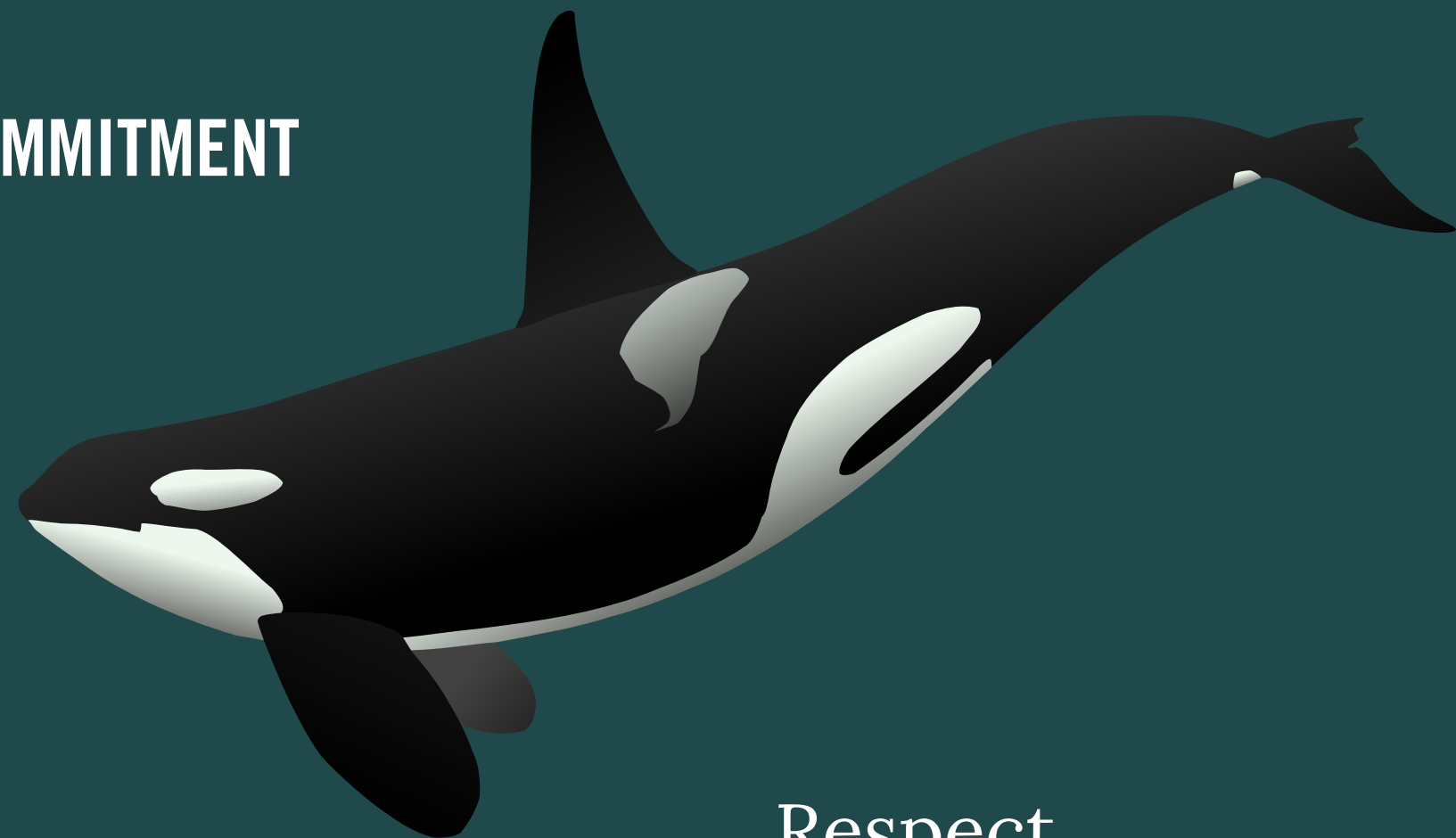
- Longevity to last beyond election cycles.
- Raise awareness of big issues and achieve greater success.
- A more formal arrangement with First Nations.
- Identify steps for what a government-to-government relationship with First Nations would look like.
- Further engagement with First Nations leadership
- Multi-issue, holistic, proactive management with concrete strategies to bridge the current structures and work toward better ones.
- Possible modifications to update legislation, or work outside legislative structures to build upon the work of former Premier Dave Barrett under whose leadership the Islands Trust and agricultural land reserve were established.
- Create opportunities for a guardian program where traditional knowledge takes the lead.
- Policy that can be developed at the grass roots level to inform policy and legislative change.
- Show that there is value in sitting at this table as it provides an opportunity to build relationship and find ways for elected officials to stand together on various issues.
- Relationships that are built by coming to the table and listening to each other.
- A shared table that includes a communications campaign so current residents of the Gulf Islands know what is taking place.
- History of the islands should be brought to the forefront by raising awareness and education.

# WHAT WE VALUE

**COMMITMENT**

Transparency

Cooperation



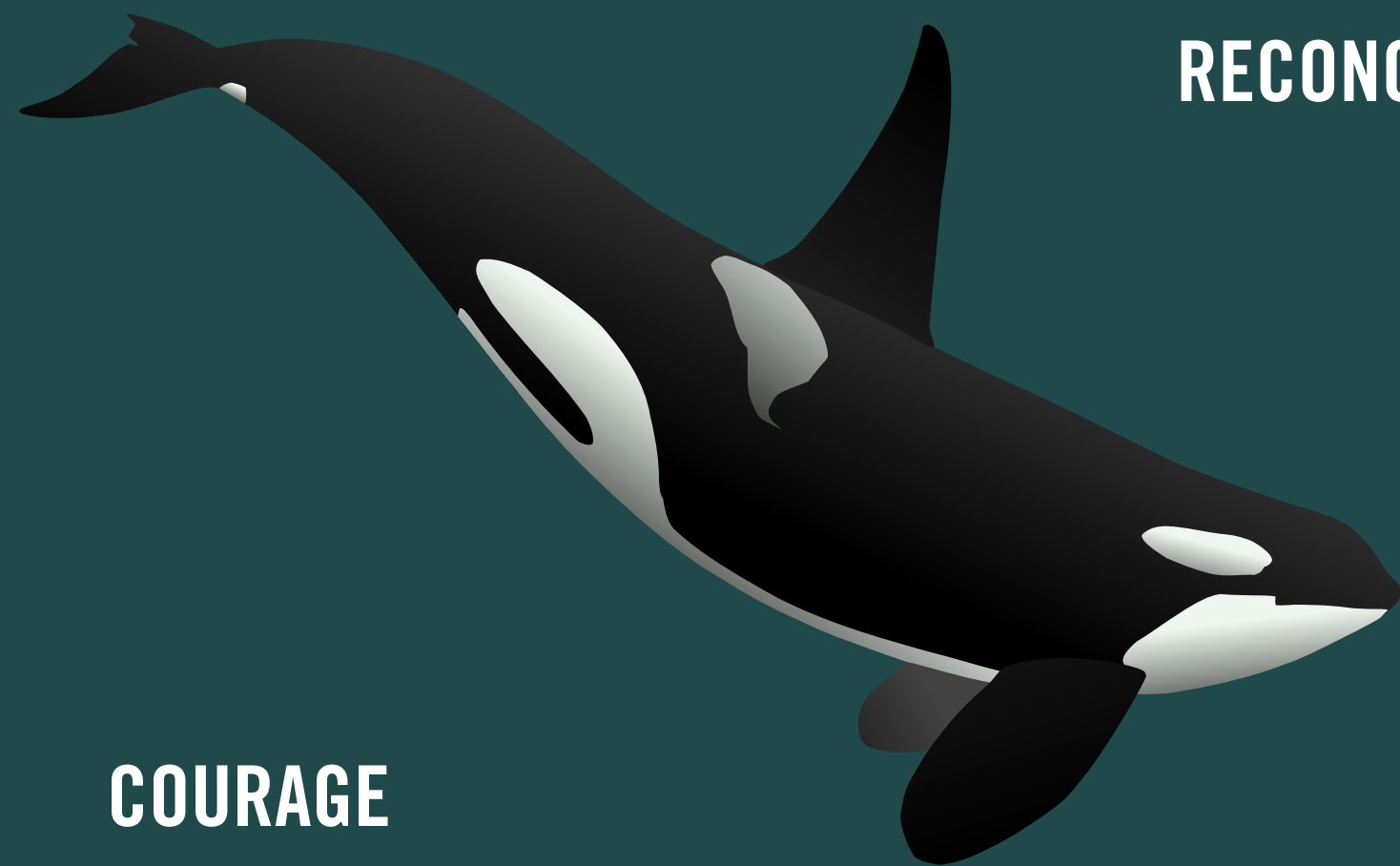
Respect

**RECONCILIATION**

Diversity

**COORDINATION**

Sharing



**COURAGE**

**SUSTAINABILITY**

# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A STRONG FOUNDATION



## A CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT WE VALUE

### BREAKOUT ROOMS

The main group was divided into smaller groups where participants discussed what values might be included in a terms of reference and also what we might call the terms of reference. Comments are summarized.

# BREAKOUT GROUP #1

**Gary Holman, Deb Morrison, Adam Olsen, Laura Patrick**

- Commitment to participate.
- Respect for all organisms, not just humans.
- Collective effort.
- Knowledge of indigenous communities both current and ancient.
- First Nations back to the forefront, in terms of land and marine stewardship; decision-making informed by indigenous knowledge and values; genuine and authentic collaboration and shared decision-making
- Commitment to reconciliation
- Values rooted in a world view that decolonize our mindset and our governance structures.
- Common vision of where we want to be; working towards it and creating the future in a collaborative journey.
- Embrace our present reality so we have the freedom to acknowledge that we still have a ways to go.
- Reflect working in, with and across community as well as working in relation to place, so we are in relationship with it.

# BREAKOUT GROUP #2

**Paul Brent, Alexa Lewis, Elizabeth May, Jane Wolverton,**

- Reconciliation better addressed as a larger group.
- A clear statement of purpose and rationale up front; there is a lot of cross-jurisdictional work to be done and small hiccups can cause a lot of stress.
- Multiple layers of governance frustrate; this group can help work through things together rather than at cross purposes.
- Provide the opportunity to identify and collaborate on overlapping policies.
- Provide an open space to share what is heard when talking to constituents and community members.
- Continued pandemic willingness to ensure people do not fall through the cracks.
- We need to make our canoe bigger to include as many voices as possible.
- Give credible amplification to issues like affordable housing which can in turn improve diversity.
- Concentrate on a few issues (e.g. affordable housing) to develop good policy, rather than initially spread resources among many issues.

# BREAKOUT GROUP #3

## **Gordon Elliot, Tahirih Rockafella, Steve Wright**

- Spirit of sharing: effectiveness of programs can be strengthened by openly sharing information and knowledge.
- Action orientation: encourage groups to take actions that produce positive observable results and public benefit to communities.
- Efforts towards sustainability: recognize the need to effectively manage and maintain a balanced relationship between community development and the protection of unique biophysical and cultural qualities of the region. The meaning of sustainability was discussed as a blanket term
- “Restore” rather than “maintain” as the latter is no longer applicable.
- Cooperation
- Stewardship as a powerful, effective tool for achieving positive results.
- Transcending jurisdictions to encourage communities to work together for the greater good. Territorial lines on a map mean nothing in terms of sustainability.
- WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society could also provide input for the name of the terms.

A CONVERSATION about VALUES.

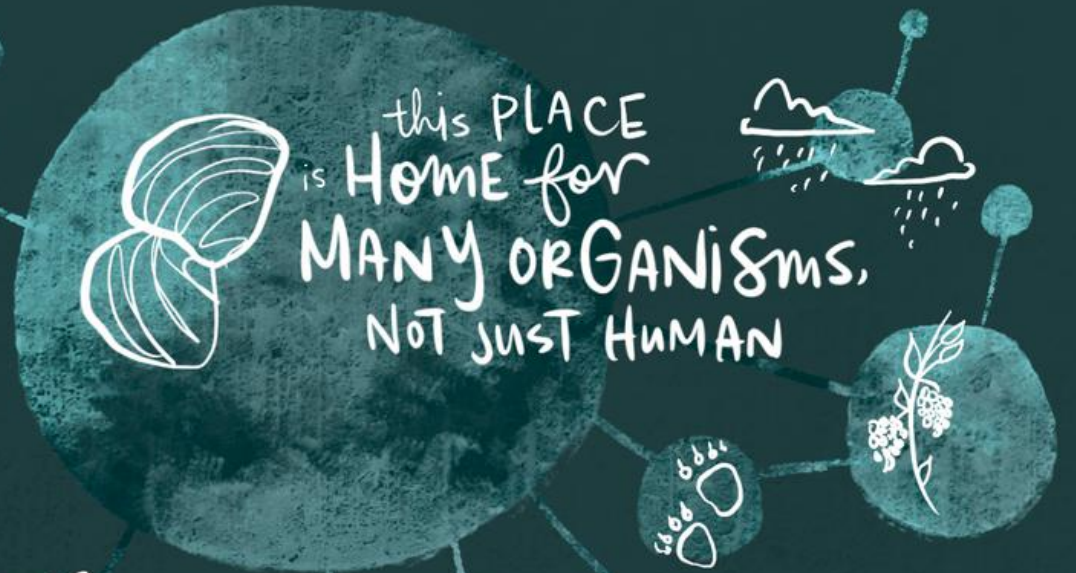


FIRST NATIONS in the front

RECONCILIATION FIRST



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE informing DECISION-MAKING



SHARED DECISION MAKING & COOPERATION

CHANGING our PERSPECTIVE.

WE NEED TO DECOLONIZE our MINDSET

SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP

DEFINING THESE MORE MEANINGFULLY

WORLDVIEW: PAN-INDIGENOUS DIVERSE

WORKING ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

NOT JUST IN CRISIS

PULLING A CANOE SOLO is DANGEROUS.



PADDLING TOGETHER IN THE SAME DIRECTION

TO DECOLONIZE STRUCTURES.

# 'TERMS OF REFERENCE'

## A FEW SUGGESTED NAMES THAT MIGHT REFLECT OUR VALUES



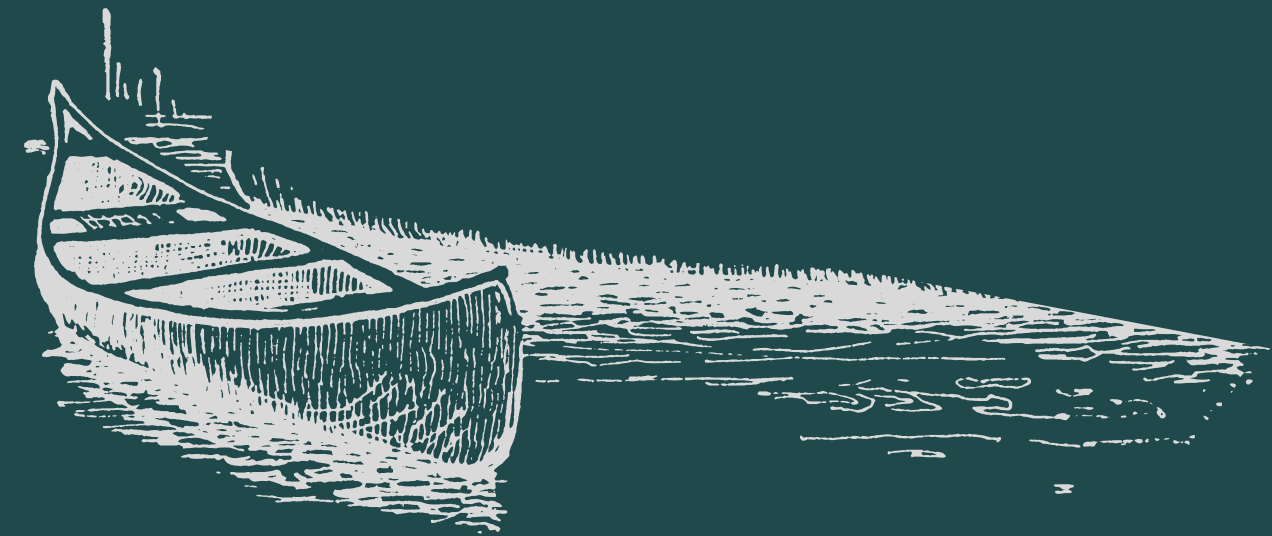
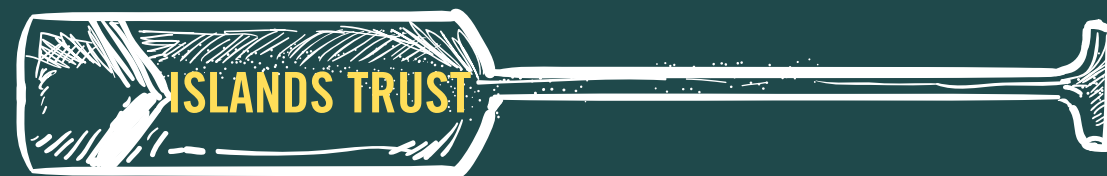
Principles of  
Collaboration





# CONCRETE ISSUES TO WORK ON TOGETHER

One canoe, many paddlers, paddling in the same direction through different storms.



# BREAKOUT GROUP #1

## BREAKOUT ROOMS

Participants discussed short- and long-term issues they would like to see addressed by the SGI Forum.



### Paul Brent, Adam Olsen, Tahirih Rockafella

- Groundwater issues, including salt water intrusion and the need for increased education about the topic.
- Foster relationship with the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC)
- Communicate expectations, resource allocation and media management in the event of an oil spill.
- Inter-island engagement as part of a guardian program
- Reconnecting island businesses via waterways as a complement to BC Ferries

# BREAKOUT GROUP #3

**Gary Holman, Laura Patrick, Steve Wright**

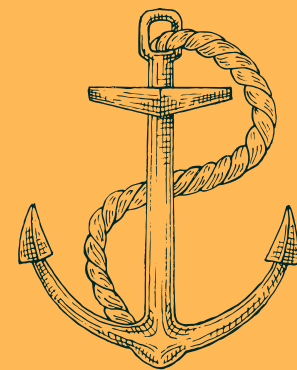
- Building trust, credibility and relationships.
- Heritage protection
- Affordable housing
- Ticketing authority
- Advocacy for First Nations co-management and guardianship
- Tree-cutting authority.



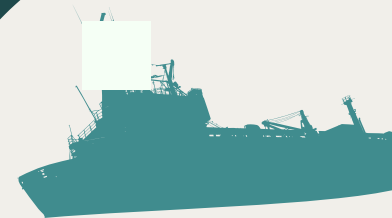
# BREAKOUT GROUP #2

**Alexa Lewis, Elizabeth May, Deb Morrisson, Jane Wolverton**

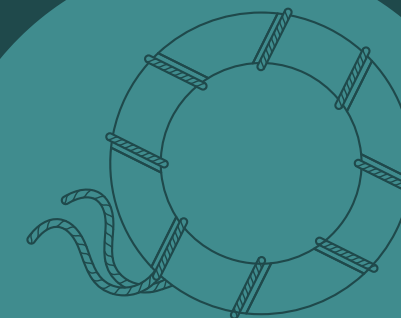
- Anchorages, mooring buoys, freighters, affordable housing and active transportation (e.g. bike paths).
- Repository of knowledge to promote a better understanding of what the islands are, including First Nations' history
- Intergovernmental approach, and active coordination, to address the issue of a loss of trees on the islands, including on private land and privately managed forest land
- Local self sufficiency and resilience including food sovereignty
- Affordable housing as a key to equity and diversity
- Electrification of the ferries
- Decarbonizing
- Active transportation
- Forest protection



**ANCHORAGES**



**DERELICT  
ABANDONED VESSELS**



**MOORING BUOY  
MANAGEMENT**



**SHORT-TERM  
RENTALS**

Broadband connectivity

Climate adaptation, particularly fire smart policies and measures to anticipate sea-level rise

Ensuring the Islands retain contiguous forest cover in the face of climate change, invasive species and outmoded forest management practices

Including First Nations in our political governance structures to further Reconciliation

Inter-island transportation

New models of co-management that are fully consistent with UNDRIP, UNFCCC, and holistic in nature-based approaches

Ocean, forest and soil carbon capture

Shoreline protection, marine protection, integration of associated islands into higher protection/conservation

Work toward some form of Marine Protected Area / Co-management agreement for the waters of the Southern Salish Sea.

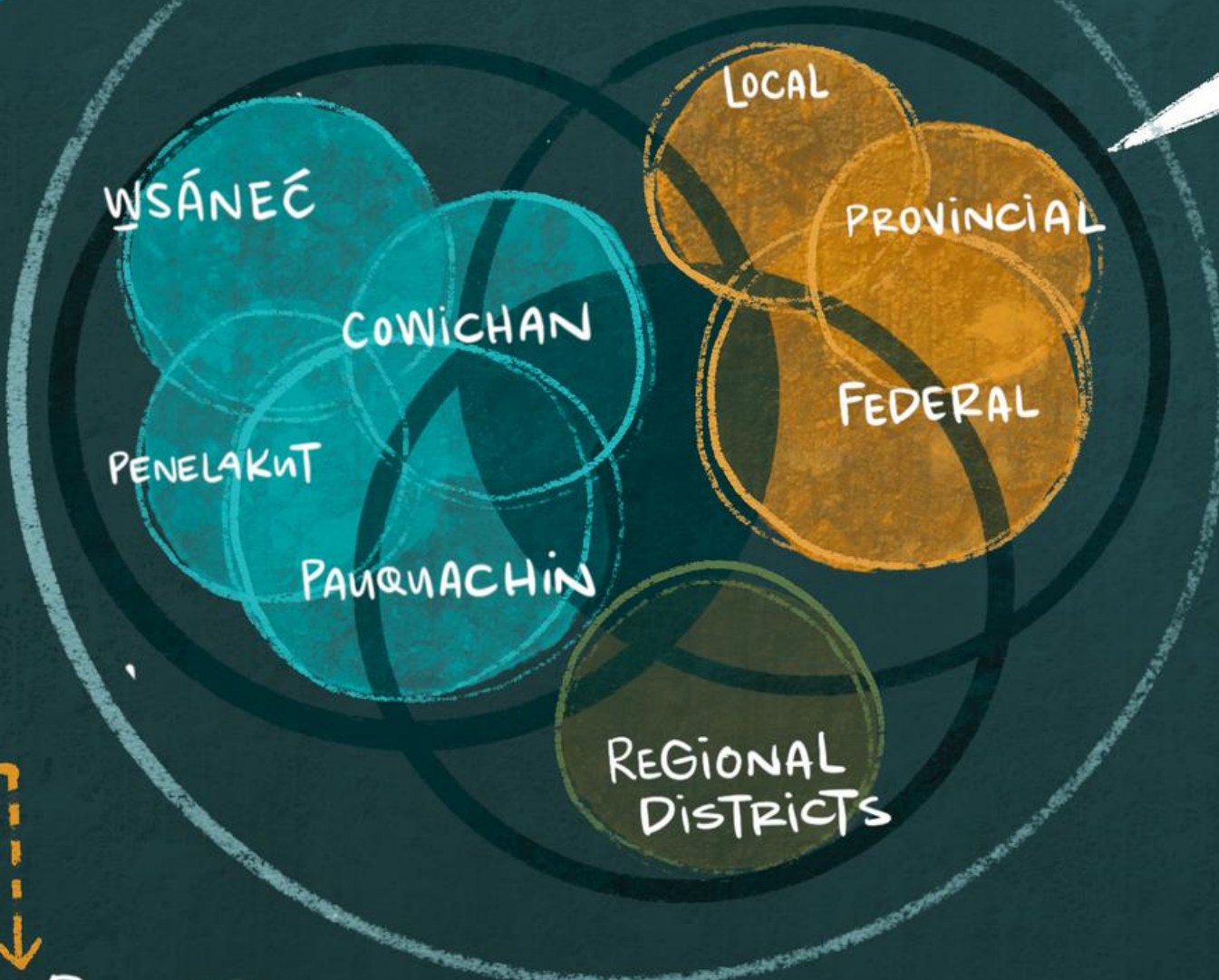
Support for all things local

# WHAT WE'D LIKE TO ACHIEVE:

SURVEY RESULTS

- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
- INFO SHARING
- ACHIEVABLE ACTION
- SUPPORT

## TRUE GOVERNMENT to GOVERNMENT



WHAT DOES A MULTI-ISSUE, PROACTIVE, COLLABORATIVE GOVERNMENT LOOK LIKE?

STARTING WITH ~~ACTION TASKS~~



"HERE'S HOW WE WANT TO BE WITH EACH OTHER."

ANOTHER TABLE TO SIT AT REQUIRES TIME & ENERGY

IN A TIME IN HISTORY WHERE COMMUNITIES ARE NAVIGATING MANY CRISES

AS A RESULT OF COLONIZATION.

IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO: SHOW WE'RE LISTENING, EARN TRUST, & PROVE THERE IS VALUE IN US WORKING TOGETHER.

~~PRIORITIZING ACTIONS~~

# RELATIONSHIPS.

# CLOSING COMMENTS

The enthusiasm and energy expressed throughout the day for building authentic, equitable relationships, continued right up until the end as Adam Olsen described the world view held by the WSÁNEĆ Peoples as one that is viewed from the water to the land rather than from the land to the water.

The importance of this perspective of land from water sparked a provocative discussion that started with Elizabeth May's observation that the change in the US administration might provide space to consider an international aspect such as a protected zone that encompasses the San Juan Islands. Laura Patrick affirmed that San Juan County would be a very willing partner.

Tarah Stafford reflected on the fact that First Nations connections transcend political boundaries; Adam Olsen added that no consultation was done when the borders were drawn. In the end, Elizabeth May suggested planning an event, post-Covid, that explores the possibilities of international collaboration for this bio-region.

Adam Olsen ended the day on a high note, proclaiming his excitement about the opportunity ahead, one that not only builds relationships, but also uses those relationships to allow the SGI Forum to speak for this beautiful place; powerfully and courageously.



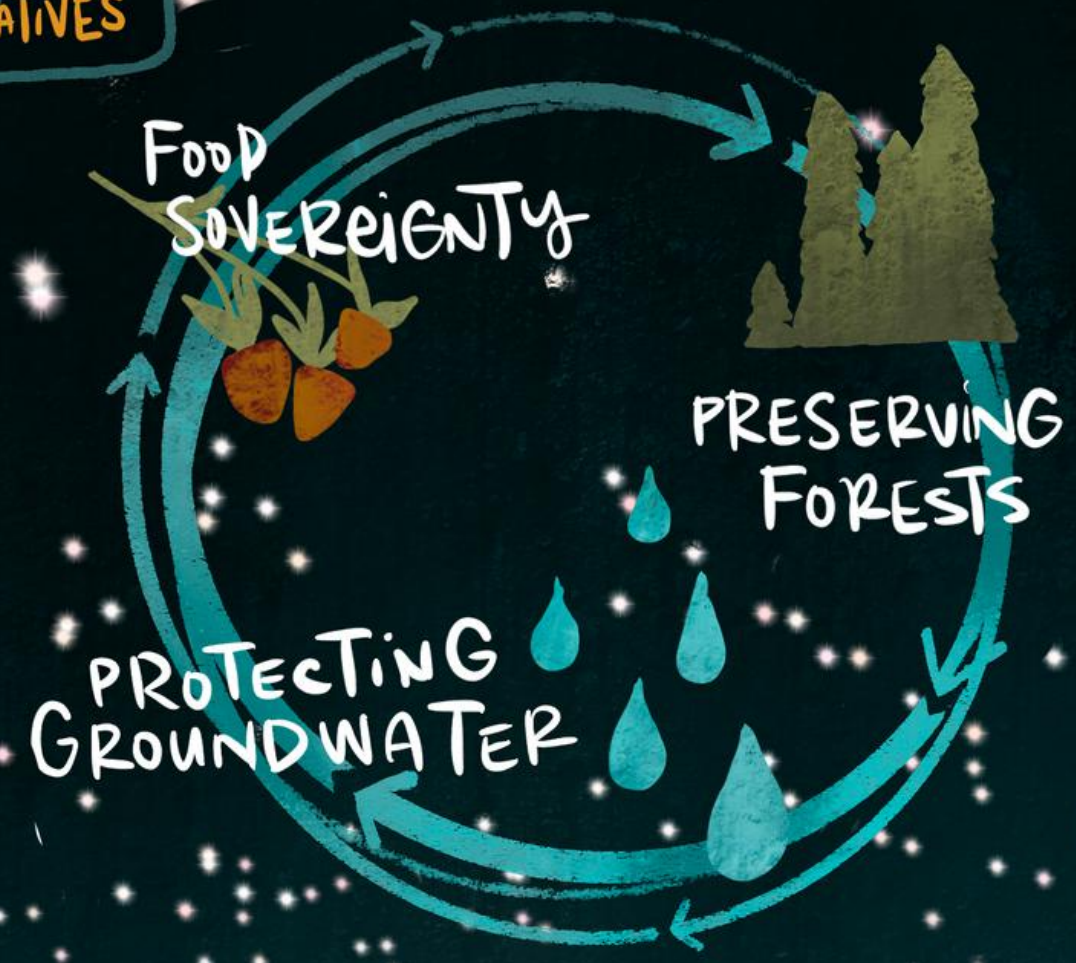
IMPROVING INTER-GOV COMMUNICATION

- eg. ● MOORING
- HOUSING
- TRANSPORTATION



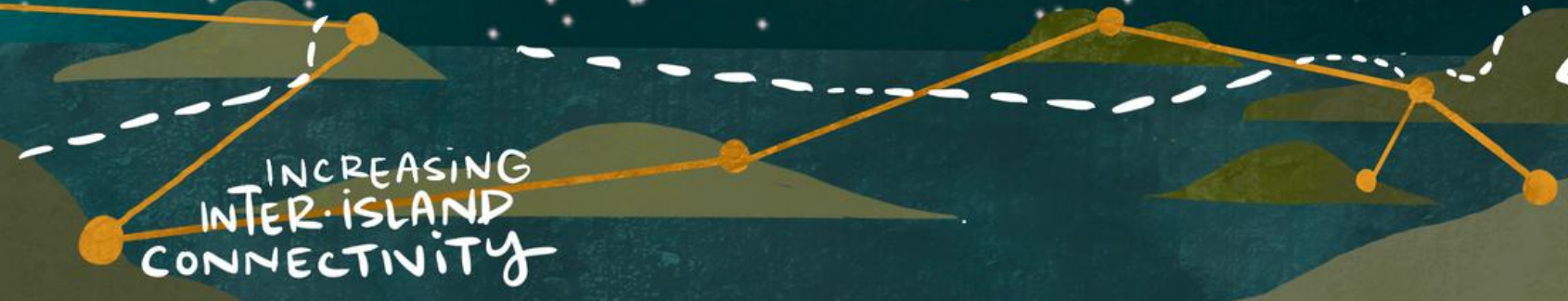
EDUCATION for NEW RESIDENTS RE: cultural history

WHAT'S POSSIBLE?



MOST IMPORTANTLY, EACH OTHER.

WHAT ARE OUR OPPORTUNITIES WHEN WE REMEMBER OUR INTERNATIONAL BORDER IS IMAGINARY?

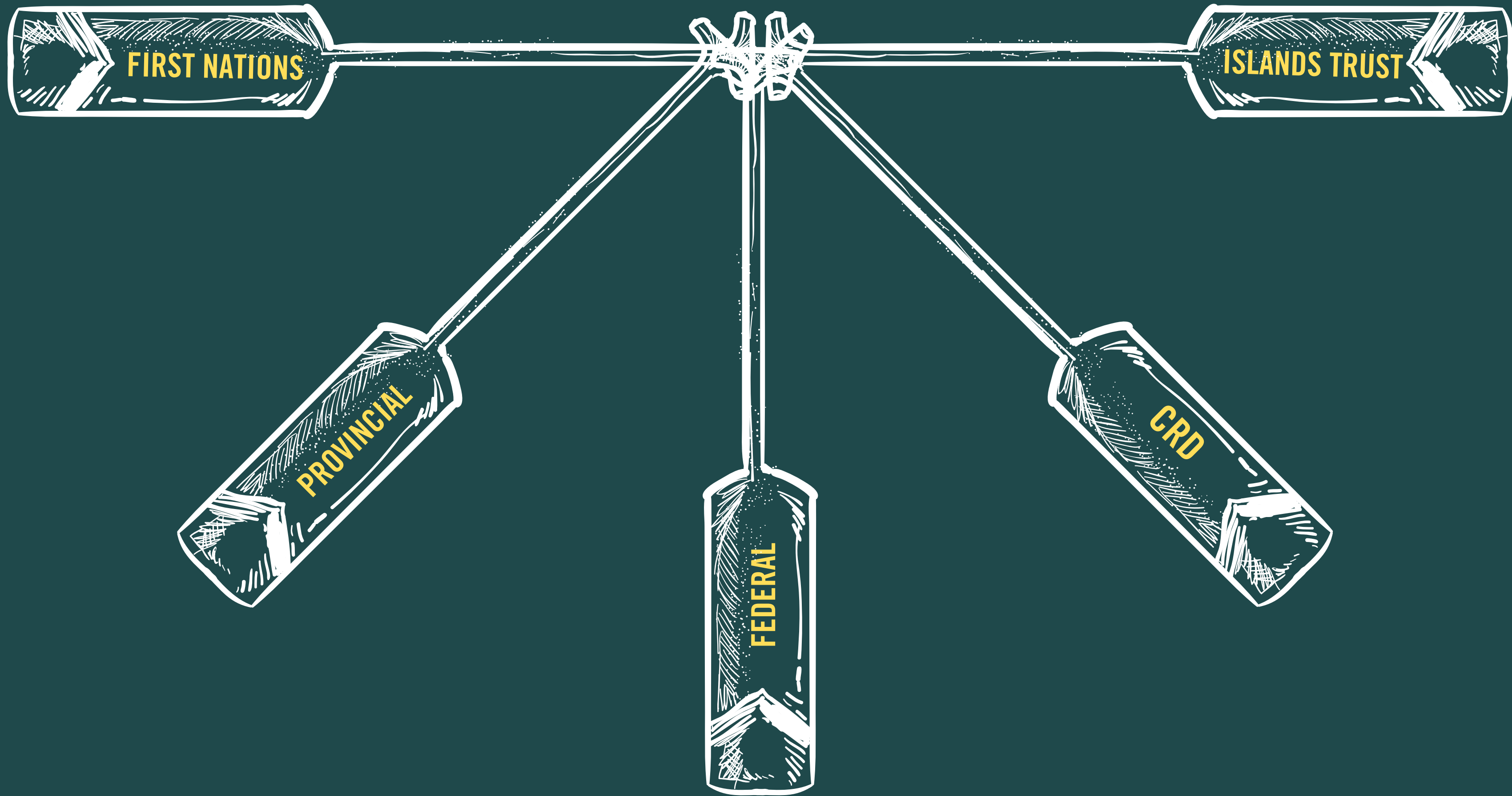


THE SALISH PERSPECTIVE SEES THE WORLD FROM THE WATER. BEGIN HERE.



# NEXT STEPS

- Adam Olsen described next steps including applying for secretariat funding and creating a meeting schedule.
- Tarah Stafford shared the input from Islands Trust Senior Intergovernmental Policy Advisor, Lisa Wilcox who suggested using a physical object, such as a paddle, to symbolically recognize the SGI Forum.
- Gillian Nicol discussed funding for the current meeting and asked group members whether they would be willing to include their names on a letter for funding to pay for future meetings.
- Participants reviewed the letter and agreed to have their names included on the letter.
- Elizabeth May noted her office is willing to provide in-kind support.
- Gary Holman added the CRD could help with Grant-in-Aid if this initial request falls through.
- Adam Olsen suggested if two or three meetings are held each year, perhaps the MLA office could host one and the MP office could host another.
- Elizabeth May noted more frequent meetings would be preferable (such as once per month) to allow participants to keep abreast of what is happening on the ground.
- Adam Olsen agreed to host the next meeting at the end of April, which may include informal discussion about the frequency of SGI Forum meetings.



FIRST NATIONS

ISLANDS TRUST

PROVINCIAL

FEDERAL

CRD