



The Galiano Learning Centre Building Connections with Nature

Climate change is the gravest risk that society faces, threatening the health of our planet and the very survival of our descendants. Yet the wonders of modern life often act as a buffer between ourselves and nature, distracting us from the urgency of developing solutions that will allow us to live engaged lives for generations to come.

Imagine a future in which people young and old, rich and poor, have re-established a healthy relationship with the environment. This is the vision for the Galiano Learning Centre, a place where people of all ages and backgrounds come to deepen their experience of nature and nurture a seed of hope for the future of our precious planet.

By increasing opportunities for children and youth to experience the wonder of the natural world, the Galiano Learning Centre will foster the values and skills necessary to inspire solutions to our planetary crisis. With the support of partners who share our vision, we will create a place for restoring the spirit while restoring the environment.



Restoring the Balance

Located in the heart of the Salish Sea, Galiano is just a short ferry ride from urban centers yet a world apart from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Here, amidst the peace and beauty of a rare coastal ecosystem, people can connect with the natural world that sustains us.

This reconnection is especially important for children and youth who increasingly spend their days in a virtual universe, their experience filtered through TV or a computer screen. Sedentary pastimes are taking their toll - only one in eight Canadian children today is getting the minimum recommended amount of physical activity. Unlike generations before, children spend little time in outdoor play and lack the contact with nature that is fundamental to physical and mental health. This estrangement contributes to the problems plaguing young people, from childhood obesity to anxiety disorders and a sense of hopelessness about the future.

The Galiano Learning Centre aims to restore the balance by creating opportunities for immersion in nature on a spectacular 188-acre site on Galiano Island. The Centre's landscape invites exploration, with grassy meadows, seasonal streams, arbutus groves and tidal pools. The property includes two kilometres of untouched waterfront as well as areas for agriculture and eco-forestry. Located in the centre of the island, the property not only borders a nature sanctuary, it includes intact old-growth forest and provides a corridor to other protected lands across the island.

In this setting, students of all ages can discover the healing power of nature through invigorating physical activities and opportunities for self-reflection. Participants can expand their learning horizons through diverse restoration activities and ecological studies of direct benefit to the local environment. Through these programs, participants learn about nature and how they can help heal the land, while in turn learning about themselves – their personal potential and how they can really make a difference in their communities and the world.



A Pioneer in Conservation

The Galiano Conservancy has been a leading force in protecting the lands and waters of Canada's west coast for 25 years. The first land trust established in British Columbia's southern gulf islands, the Conservancy is widely recognized for its innovative approaches to ecological restoration, conservation mapping, habitat protection and community education. Every year, university students from around the world seek internships with us to learn new restoration techniques and conduct environmental research.

Through acquisition of land and conservation covenants, the Conservancy has protected more than 1000 acres of land on Galiano Island, located in one of Canada's rarest ecosystems. More than 50 rare or endangered species that live in the imperiled Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem have been found on Galiano, including the peregrine falcon, red-legged frog, white fairy poppy and a variety of species of rockfish. We are actively engaged in stewardship projects to preserve many of these threatened species.



A Seed of Hope

Inspiring children and youth to value and protect our fragile environment has long been a Conservancy priority. Since 2000, we have provided experiential education programs to school and community groups from across southwestern BC. Many groups are from the inner-city, where children may never have seen the ocean or a forest. The Conservancy has also hosted immigrant groups and organizations such as Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. To date, more than 30,000 people have participated in environmental learning activities offered by the Galiano Conservancy.

But an afternoon program is not enough to forge a lasting connection with nature. Only through a deeper immersion can young people ignite their instincts to bond with the earth, the sea and the creatures who share our world.

This project is a proactive step forward to provide future generations with a legacy of hope and a model for healthy, sustainable relationships with the earth we live on. Florence James, a Penelakut First Nations elder, once said that these programs are “planting a seed of hope so that life is meaningful.”



Inspire the World

Since acquiring the Learning Centre land in 2012, the Galiano Conservancy has launched restoration projects and begun construction of facilities for multi-day programs. A building was donated by Vaagen Fibre Canada that will serve as a classroom, kitchen and dining hall. A solar powered pump, donated by Van Isle Water and Franklin Electric, supplies water from a natural spring.

Our immediate priority is to establish a campsite where school and youth groups, university researchers and community organizations can connect with nature. Through involvement in hands-on ecological restoration, participants will learn how they can help heal the land, while in turn learning about themselves – their personal potential and how they can make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of their communities and the planet.

Our ultimate goal is to construct a permanent facility that will showcase local stewardship initiatives and serve as a model for sustainable community living. The Centre will feature leading-edge and appropriate technology. Conceptual plans for heating and energy generation will incorporate renewable energy solutions and food will be grown in resident gardens.

To advance this vision, we are seeking support from individuals, foundations, companies and other organizations who share our commitment to protecting the health of our children and the future of our planet by fostering a reunion with nature.

We invite you to join us as we build a hub for ecological learning that will inspire the world.

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