

Galiano Conservancy Association
First Nations Deer Hunting Policy
- Millard Learning Centre -

The Galiano Conservancy Association (GCA) board and membership wish to provide access for Indigenous hunters to harvest deer at the 76-hectare (188-acre) Millard Learning Centre (MLC) in order to promote reconciliation, local food security, and desired conservation outcomes. This policy will be reviewed as needed, or every 5 years, as part of the GCA's strategic plan renewal process.

Hunting access is subject to the following conditions:

- This policy only applies to the Millard Learning Centre.
- Hunting is never permitted on the MLC property between April 1 and August 31.
- Hunting is only permitted by individuals that are members of federally recognized First Nations with an established connection to Galiano Island, and/or to federally registered status Indians who are resident on Galiano Island and who have an established connection to the first families of Galiano Island.
- Indigenous hunters who are members of the first families of Galiano Island but are not federally registered status Indians may participate in scheduled hunts during BC's regulated deer hunting season, provided they are appropriately certified (CORE – Conservation Outdoor Recreation Education and/or PAL – Possession & Acquisition License) and possess a valid hunting license.
- Hunters are expected to adhere to all applicable hunting rules and regulations.
- Hunters must review this Policy, sign a liability waiver, and be oriented to the MLC property by GCA staff or a designated lead hunter prior to engaging in hunting at the MLC.
- Hunting is not permitted north of Porlier Pass Road, within 100 meters of Porlier Pass Road or the property boundaries, and not within 50 meters of the classroom and office facilities (see attached map).
- Hunting only occurs during pre-arranged hunting events when no community or public classes are scheduled and the MLC can be effectively closed to all members of the public for at least 12 hours prior as well as during the hunting event, with closure signage posted for at least 24 hours prior to and during the hunting event.
- The GCA reserves the right to refuse hunting access requests and/or cancel scheduled hunting events.

- Any hunting activities will be scheduled (including persons involved, timing and location) ahead of time with a staff liaison, and will be led by a hunter who is oriented to the property and who is designated by the GCA to lead hunting events.
- A member of the GCA staff and/or board will be present at the MLC for the duration of the hunting event; in the event that this is not possible, the hunter designated by the GCA to lead hunting events will have contact information for the staff liaison, who will be present on the island and available on short notice as needed.
- Hunters must make every effort to ensure deer are not unduly harassed or stressed during the hunt, and are dispatched as quickly and painlessly as possible.
- All parts of the deer must be dealt with in an ethical, appropriate, and respectful manner.
- Hunters are accountable to their community, and we ask that food from the hunt is to be shared with community members.
- The GCA will cooperate with other island organizations to offer venison preparation workshops to benefit the Galiano community as well as First Nation partners.

This Indigenous hunting policy operates on three clear principles:

1. Safety must remain paramount at all times.
2. Scientific evidence and traditional knowledge should drive approaches to deer management, with ecological integrity as the goal.
3. Facilitating traditional practices, such as deer hunting, can simultaneously improve food security, increase local resiliency, foster meaningful reconciliation, and support an Indigenous cultural resurgence.

SAFETY

The GCA, which has offered outdoor education programs to more than 40,000 schoolchildren as well as hosted thousands of university and adult learners, must have as its central concern the safety of all staff, program participants and community members. Deer hunting at the MLC, while offering significant benefits for deer management and resurgence of traditional practices, must be carefully considered and managed at all times according to the above principles, of which safety is paramount.

A SCIENCE-DRIVEN APPROACH

As a conservation organization, the GCA has active concerns with the current overabundance of native Columbian black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus hemionus*). There exists a mounting, scientifically well-established cascade of negative impacts of hyper-abundant deer on wildflowers, songbird populations, and tree/shrub growth and regeneration. There is also an abundance of scientific evidence showing that healthy ecosystems must have top predators to keep the ecosystem balanced and resilient.

Although we anticipate hunting activities at the MLC to have a negligible effect on the Galiano deer population as a whole, it also is our goal to achieve a better ecological balance for the deer population and ecosystems at the MLC by simulating natural predation through hunting. In this way, the MLC can act as a living laboratory, where the effects of deer harvesting can be studied. Data on the age, gender and number of deer taken will be collected after each hunting event to facilitate long-term study.

We are already actively addressing the impacts of deer overpopulation on GCA lands by fencing our garden and restoration sites, staying abreast of the best available management science and engaging in public education. We have begun and will continue close monitoring of the impacts of deer browsing through the comparison of deer exclosures and control sites.

Venison is a high-value protein that can be ethically and sustainably harvested, with a far lower carbon footprint than commercial meat production. Deer harvesting is also a positive way to promote both food security and cultural resurgence for Indigenous peoples.

FOSTERING STEPS TOWARD MEANINGFUL RECONCILIATION

For reconciliation to be truly meaningful, it will require those with control over lands and waters to open them to First Nations to resume and reinvigorate traditional practices and economies.

The Galiano Conservancy Association (GCA) has already begun to facilitate the gathering of traditional plant food and medicines by Indigenous people on GCA lands and gardens, including our Nuts'a'maat Forage Forest and in the permaculture Food Forest.

Traditional deer hunting helps significantly to meet the food, cultural and ceremonial needs of Indigenous peoples who have occupied the southern Gulf Islands since time immemorial.

In December 2019, in response to requests from some Penelakut Tribe members, the GCA accommodated a controlled hunt inside the MLC's 76 hectares (188 acres), which was followed by a hands-on community workshop on deer butchering, with participants taking home several venison products. The workshop facilitated sharing of skills and food with our

Penelakut neighbours, and enjoyed broad community support here on Galiano. More people asked to attend the event than the GCA was able to accommodate. Since then, the GCA has hosted this deer butchering workshop on an annual basis, each time in partnership with Penelakut knowledge keepers. The GCA has also received numerous requests from several Penelakut residents for future deer hunting opportunities, and believe this policy will facilitate offering such opportunities more consistently.

