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Building inter-Island connections

Christa Grace-Warrick

For the second time this year, a group of Gabriolans sailed south on the Salish Sea to visit other Islanders in a time-honoured way.

Last April, members of the Gabriola Commons Foundation came by ferry to make a presentation to various southern Islanders about the Gabriola Commons' work on issues like land acquisition, local food, community building and affordable housing.

On a mid-August weekend, inspired by a photo of the Galiano community garden in *Island Tides*, members of another Gabriola non-profit, Island Futures, sailed south in three boats, first visiting Galiano folks at Montague Harbour (plus Judith and Jurgen, aka The Tinkerers, from Mayne).

Two boats continued on to a gathering at Pender's Community Hall, organized by the island's Community Transition group. 'Bicyclista' Louis Vallée (see ad page 11) from Mayne also joined about a dozen Pender Islanders.

Sitting in the shade on the Hall's deck, people talked about improving inter-Island connections; at a distance and face-to-face. This month, Island Futures is talking of connecting boats, skippers and travellers who are interested in moving themselves and goods directly island-to-island as an alternative to circuitous ferry connections requiring vehicles. This trip itself was the maiden voyage of the boating venture.

Coordinator of Island Futures, Victor Anthony, asks: 'How do we set up a collaboration framework connecting

organizations and individuals on different Gulf Islands who are interested in living sustainably? What ideas and approaches to sustainability does your island want to share with other islands? What ideas and approaches to sustainability do you want to hear about from other islands?'

Island Futures' areas of interest include: agricultural land and food security, ecosystems and natural areas, energy, transportation, economics, learning, waste management, climate change and air quality, housing, soul and art, and history.

Victor emphasizes the power of face-to-face connections—hence the 'green fleet' idea—the amount of wide-ranging talk in the Pender circle confirms that. But given winter weather and distance, how to keep interaction happening? Maintaining the face-to-face idea, Skype was suggested. The free live video and voice connection over the internet seems as if it would help keep that direct connection alive.

Victor suggests that southern Islanders wanting to put together a reciprocal trip to Gabriola email him. He is willing to help coordinate a date that would work for boats from several islands and put people in touch with each other. His email is victorsez@gmail.com, also visit islandfutures.ca.

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