

# Newsletter

*"A life not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory."*



[Exterior of Sea Island School with surrounding fields and students]. (1896). (Source: City of Richmond Archives, 1977-0005-00002).

## President's Message



As summer ends and fall begins, the photos in the next few pages offer a glimpse of key events since spring. We had a reunion, hosted Doors Open, and participated in Burkeville

Daze. It was busy but we had so much fun! In late June we learned our collective work earned us a 2024 Richmond Heritage Award - an accomplishment we can all be very proud of! We are grateful to Barbara Kinahan (née Moodie), granddaughter of Thomas and Marion Laing, for authoring two stories in this issue. These are personal memories of a special childhood.

September begins a new school year. In this issue, read a story of a teacher you might have had. Learn about the Sea Island man behind a Richmond elementary school name.

And, recently, we were thrilled to locate the contract for the first school in Richmond, dated October 28th, 1890. Initially a one-room school, a second classroom was added in 1896 (see photo above). Sea Island School, located at the corner of McDonald and Grauer Roads, was built on land donated by the McDonald family. Look for a quiz in this issue and learn some 'fun facts' about Sea Island and the people who lived there. Send us your 'quiz' suggestions for the next issue.

And be sure to join us for our Coffee Chats starting this month.

*Eunice Robinson*



President  
Sea Island Heritage Society

## Upcoming Events

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Calling on all members to join us at the virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held on October 17, 2024, via Zoom.

This will be an **evening event**, combined with our monthly Coffee Chat. The AGM will start at 7 p.m., followed by the Coffee Chat. The whole evening event will be held from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Current members can vote on SIHS matters.

### COFFEE CHATS



A HUGE benefit to being a member of SIHS is your access to participate in the monthly Coffee Chats. The Coffee Chat is a Zoom event that is held on the 3rd Thursday every month from 10 a.m. to noon. We send every member a Zoom link to these events a week prior to when they occur.

We've been asked by some of our members to consider having the occasional Coffee Chat in the evening. Because of these requests the October Coffee Chat will be in the evening from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. It will be combined with the AGM.

The events are lightly themed, but they also provide a forum for us all to connect from wherever we are and spend a couple of hours together.

Perhaps you have a desire to discuss something of importance or feel the need to connect with an acquaintance you haven't seen or spoken to for some time. Maybe you want to bring up some interesting point or just sit back and listen to the rest of us ramble on.... This is the place to do it!

For the remainder of 2024 the dates and themes of the Coffee Chats are:

**September 19, 2024 - Morning Event! 10 a.m. to noon - Reunion Review.** We'll share some photos from the reunion and talk about how it went. We're also seeking input from everyone on what to do in 2025.

**October 17, 2024 - Evening Event! - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - AGM & Signage Discussion.** We have a few different signage projects on the go on Sea Island. This will be an opportunity to update everyone on what & where these are and to get input from everyone on their thoughts on these and future projects.

**November 21, 2024 - Morning Event! - 10 a.m. to noon - Remembrance Day Topics.** This is an opportunity to honor those who served and to highlight the contributions Sea Islanders made.

As a member, look for an email invitation to these events as we get closer to them. If you're not a member but would like to participate, just send us an email and we'll happily provide you with the Zoom link. New participants are always welcome!

If you have any questions or need some assistance with Zoom don't hesitate to reach out to David England, our VP. He will gladly walk you through it before the Coffee Chat.

Looking forward to seeing you all online!

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

December is the time to join or renew your membership with the Sea Island Heritage Society. If you are a lifetime member, no action is necessary. For those wanting to join or renew, we offer annual and lifetime memberships.

Please watch for the reminder notices prior to and during the month of December.



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## Spring 2024 was busy!

The Society was involved in three events this past Spring, each a chance to celebrate life on Sea Island with different interest groups.

The *Sea Island Reunion* was an impressive social gathering, primarily of those who live or have lived on Sea Island - neighbours, childhood friends, classmates. We enjoyed a performance of *Sea Island Grass* and ate tasty treats, while chatting, laughing, and remembering as if we were kids again.

*Doors Open* is an annual event sponsored by the Richmond Museum. At the Sea Island Annex (*formerly Sea Island School*), the doors opened to our 'home' where we set up a canopy out front to display our large maps. Visitors from all over viewed images, artifacts and binders, wanting to learn more about the island's history and heritage.

*Burkeville Daze* is an annual event hosted by the Sea Island Community Association. At our booth, many residents stopped by, curious about Burkeville house histories, and some added names to class photos. Many representatives from different levels of government were very supportive of our projects.



SEA ISLAND REUNION

Yvonne, Marylin & Laretta



Mingling at the reunion!



Marylin, Karen, Doreen, Eunice & David



Councillor Bill McNulty & Helen Healey

Bob Paddington, Gordie Falls & David England





**Sea Island Reunion 2024 - Group photo**



**Ray Duford**



**Thanks Paulette for the buffet!**



**Janet and Jim O'Leary**



**Doors Open 2024**





BURKEVILLE DAZE 2024

**Councillor Chak Au, M.P. Wilson Miao, & School Trustee Alice Wong**



**Eunice Robinson & Barb Neilsen - SIHS**



**Old cars parade**



**Burkeville Daze parade**



**Sea Island Heritage Society booth at Burkeville Daze**



## The Old Farm

*My Favourite Place* by Barbara Kinahan (née Moodie)



The world as I knew it changed as I skipped across the shaking, wooden Marpole Bridge from the city to the country. We could look

down on the muddy Fraser River moving swiftly beneath our feet. We were going to the farm! My favourite place!

It was my grandpa Thomas Laing's farm, now run by his son Richard. Uncle Richard, his wife Grace McMynn and their children Jim and Emma lived there and farmed the land. It is the late 1930s, on the quiet summer days before World War II. My sister and I ran with excitement as our mother tried to keep up!

We passed Grauer's store and, keeping to the side of the road, on we walked. It was a long way for short legs. We passed the Grauer farm with its lovely white farmhouse and big white barns that housed the herd of Jersey cows that produced the milk for Frasea Farm trucks to deliver. Sometimes we met the herd on the road as they returned from pasture to the barns for milking. The cows were gentle creatures with tan coloured hides and large dark eyes.

One field more and we could see the stand of trees planted along the roadside. My grandpa Laing had made a little ceremony for six of his grandchildren. We were each to plant a tree. I remember an oak, a chestnut, and a maple that we planted so long ago.

We were nearly there - here was the garage with the huge old horseshoe nailed above the door- a reminder of grandpa's Clydesdale horses.



Figure 1. [Thomas and Tommy Laing with the Clydesdale horses]. (unknown date). (Source: Barbara Kinahan, photo 15).

We crossed the wooden footbridge over the open ditch and walked up the paved path to the front steps of a lovely house painted white, the wide porch facing south. We walked around the corner to a long set of stairs which led up to the back door. There was a blanket on the porch- the sleeping place for Fanny, the Collie dog. On cold winter nights she slept in the basement beside the warm furnace.



Figure 2. [Thomas and Marion Laing farmhouse]. (unknown date). (Source: Barbara Kinahan, photo 55).



When we knocked, the door was opened and we were greeted by Auntie Grace, so happy to see us. After some chatting, we were off to explore, first the house and then the barn.

Our cousins, Jimmy and Emma, were good friends and made us welcome. This was their home and they were proud of it. The cozy kitchen with the cream and green wood stove and big table, led into the sunny dining room. Across from the entrance hall was the living room with a corner fireplace. On the wall hung two large, framed pictures; one was of the imposing exterior of Durham Cathedral, the other the interior of the cathedral with its massive carved stone columns. The hall held an oak hall stand with its mirror reflecting the staircase leading upstairs to four bedrooms. Back down the hall was the bathroom - with its claw-footed bathtub, sink and toilet. There was another bedroom next to the bathroom- early days for an "en suite".

The basement was at ground level-there were no dug basements on Sea Island.

The best was yet to come. Our cousins took us outdoors. We walked a path past the hired man's shack, to the lane that led through the farm from the main road down to the river where the 105-acre farm ended. The small house that Thomas Laing and his bride Marion Mackie came to after their marriage on January 1, 1895, was gone. They had raised their five children there until building the present house in 1914.

Crossing the lane, we passed the big chicken coop. The chickens all cackled wildly at our approach. It was the big red barn that we were heading to. Already we could hear the two farm horses snorting and shuffling their great hoofs in the stalls. There was a wonderful smell of

horses and hay as we, avoiding those dangerous hind legs, admired Dolly and Ned.

Then it was on through to the great inside of the barn where bales of hay and straw were stored. Slippery stairs led up to the loft where we rolled around and played in the hay. One winter there was so much hay baled that there was a tunnel leading from the horse stalls through the great barn to the cowshed where we next went.



Figure 3. [Laing barn]. (unknown date). (Source: Barbara Kinahan, photo 56).

There was the herd of Holstein cows, back in from pasture and waiting to be milked. They mooed at us as we admired them. Outside in a shed and in its own space stood the bull, looking cranky and fierce with the ring in its nose. We knew he couldn't get out but we still gave him a wide space.

The last spot to visit was the small dairy. It was spotlessly clean. There the milk was run over cold water filled coils to cool it, then poured into tall milk churns which were set outside to be picked up and taken to a dairy for pasteurization, bottling and delivery to customers the next morning.

We had a lovely day on the farm, acres lay beyond what we had seen, planted with wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa, clover, and peas, all to be



harvested, along with the fruit from the old orchard which lay between the house and the barn.

Too soon our lovely day on the farm was over and it was time to return home. We knew we were welcome to come another time.

Now this is all memories. My Aunt Grace and Uncle Rich and my cousins Jimmy and Emma have died, the farm where three generations lived and worked is now under gravel and tarmac. It is the north runway of the Vancouver International Airport (YVR).

However, my Uncle Rich did leave a lasting legacy at YVR. When the main runway of the airport was about to be paved in the late 1950s, one night he said to his son, "Jim let's go." They crossed fields to where gravel was laid, uncovered a patch and then laid a circle of old horseshoes. They then replaced the gravel which was soon paved over. Horseshoes have always been thought to bring good luck. When I travel to or from YVR, I always remember the horseshoes and the people and the farm I loved so much.

The pictures of Durham Cathedral - brought back from Thomas Laing's 1925 trip home to County Durham to see his sisters and brothers, hangs on my living room wall. The oak hall stand is there by my front door, all visible items from the Laing family farm (1895 to 1960s) on Sea Island.

The farm was bought by the Airport Authority and the house and barn stood empty for a while before being demolished.

After the house, garage and barn were demolished, one of my daughters found the old horseshoe from the garage door. It now hangs on her garage wall in Point Grey (Vancouver). Another reminder of long-ago Sea Island!

## Welcome Visitors

*written by Barbara Kinahan (née Moodie)*

When Marion Mackie and Thomas Laing were married in 1895, they lived in the old McRoberts house near the banks of the Fraser River, until 1914.

Marion was busy with her young family but



Figure 4. [Thomas Laing and Fitzgerald McCleery at Laing home (old McRoberts' house). (unknown date) (Source: Barbara Kinahan, photo 16).

always happy to welcome visitors.

Women from the Musqueam Reserve would paddle over the river (Fraser) to see her. My grandma, Marion Laing, told me stories of those long ago visits and how they would enjoy a cup of tea together. Marion would give the women any clothing or blankets that she could spare. In my grandparents' home there were two old woven baskets, which were probably gifts in return for friendship and hospitality they enjoyed over the years.

This was a story I had told to my children while they were growing up.

In the summer of 1978, my eldest daughter, Catherine, worked at The Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (UBC). One day she chatted with a woman who had grown up on the Musqueam



Reserve. My daughter told her the story of her great grandmother's visits from the Musqueam women. This, now elderly, woman remembered visiting Mrs. Laing as a child with the women who would bring her along to help them talk together as she understood English.

This coincidental meeting is a tale of early days on Sea Island and, of the meeting of two cultures in a homely way.

## Take the Quiz

Walk with us down memory lane. For each photo, select the most accurate response from those given. Find the answers on page 14 with a few fun facts added.

1. Where are these Sea Island Cannery pilings located?



- a. Eburne
- b. Dinsmore Island
- c. Coast Guard Station
- d. Swishwash Island

2. Who was known for his prized duck decoys?



- a. Terry Slack
- b. Percy Bicknell
- c. Gordon Bicknell
- d. Albert Laing

3. Which was the first "post tensioned segmental bridge" in the Lower Mainland?



- a. Moray Channel Bridge
- b. Canada Line Transit Bridge
- c. No. 2 Road Bridge
- d. Sea Island Connector



## Edna Lorraine Johnson (Mrs. Scott) (1927-1997)

written by Maureen Ross (née Stark)



Edna Lorraine Johnson was born September 5, 1927, in Vancouver, British Columbia, maybe the first day of school for many, and did it not turn out she was destined to be a teacher? Yes, it did, and she loved teaching! After attending Normal School in 1946-1947, she taught her first year at Bridgeport,

then moved to Sea Island Elementary and stayed until 1955. Along the way she shared classes with Mrs. Margaret Ann Reid in 1949-50 and Mrs. Evelyn Mary Ramsay in 1953-54. And imagine this: it was right in little Sea Island Elementary where she met her future husband, Gordon George Gray Scott, when every school day he would pick up his mother, Mrs. Frances Scott, from teaching her Grade one class. This was at the same time when his father, Mr. Andrew Shewan Gray Scott, had the distinction of being the first principal of the newly built school. Mr. Scott (Jr.) just happened to notice 'Miss Johnson' one day and then seemed to appear from then on with regularity...and the rest is history.

They were married in St. Anthony's Church in Vancouver on June 27, 1953, maybe even the last day of the school year. Such timing!

Mr. and Mrs. Scott had six children (their first child, Gordon, died in infancy) while at the same

time managing many moves within BC to accommodate Mr. Scott's profession as a MacMillan Bloedel inspector. As many might agree, teaching and raising a large family simultaneously, as well as moving with rigid regularity, is a mind-boggling and physically demanding endeavour, so Mrs. Scott left her profession temporarily and concentrated on child-rearing and maintaining a happy home base. One of their early homes was a two-floor apartment in the Marpole area of Vancouver with her mother and two sisters upstairs, she and Mr. Scott in a downstairs apartment and a hair salon in the front which was owned and operated by her sisters, Norma and Evelyn.

Further moves involved many other places: Avola on the North Thompson River, back to Vancouver, Richmond in 1960, later to Port Alberni, to Oliver in 1963 where, since all the children were now older and in school, Mrs. Scott re-entered the teaching profession (Oliver Elementary), then North Delta in 1970 for Grade five (Annieville Elementary), Cougar Canyon in Delta in 1980 for Grade five, retirement in 1989 and finally getting settled in 1996 in Newton, BC. Phew!! Quite the demanding itinerary.

Despite this necessity to move with regularity, it appears Mrs. Scott and her husband still found time for their own personal travelling--for instance, to California where Mr. Scott's parents moved in 1952. (Mr. Scott (Sr.), quite possibly for health reasons and a more amenable climate, had accepted a teaching position in the Thousand Oaks area of Ventura, California). Subsequent travel to more distant countries, such as England, Norway (Mrs. Scott's father's birthplace), China, Bangkok and Hawaii, the latter being a favourite Spring Break

destination, rounded out their travel adventures.

**Aside:** Did you know that Miss E.L. Johnson and Mr. Victor Holob (a fellow teacher on Sea Island) organized the Sea Island annual sports day on June 20, 1952?

Family and friends knew Mrs. Scott to be a “beautiful, kind and caring soul whose unconditional love was one of the greatest gifts she gave to each of them.” These exact words were taken from her beautifully written obituary when she passed away on March 12, 1997. One can see that she had all of these qualities simply by looking at her class pictures. It would not be difficult to feel that she imparted the same unconditional love to her little charges in the classroom when many former students respectfully said they loved her classes with one in particular saying Mrs. Scott was her most favourite elementary teacher of all. She took immense joy in her teaching career which spanned a period of forty plus years. And, simply put, as her daughter said: she loved teaching!

Her passing occurred much too soon at the young age of 69, one year after moving to Newton, BC. Preceding her was her first child Gordon, parents Ella and George Johnson, brothers George and Ernie, and sister Norma and left to mourn were her husband, sister Evelyn, six children (three boys and three girls with all three girls becoming teachers) and 11 grandchildren. Just maybe...mother passed on her teaching attributes to her daughters?



Figure 5. [Sea Island Elementary School Grade 5 - Miss Edna Lorraine Johnson]. (1952-53). (Source: SIHS M0001297).

## John T. Errington Elementary: The Sea Islander behind the name

written by the Sea Island Heritage Society



Figure 6. [John T. Errington Elementary School, Richmond, BC]. (2024). (Source: Marylin Low).

John T. Errington Elementary is a small public school located at 9831 Herbert Road in Richmond, BC. In 1957, the first school buildings were given the name John T. Errington, but John T. Errington Elementary School (1957- ) on Herbert Road was not officially opened until 1959. The school initially



served about 200 students and, with a changing student population and renovations as needed over the years, welcomed 320 students in 2023. There is a short street nearby named Errington Road.

### *Who was John T. Errington?*

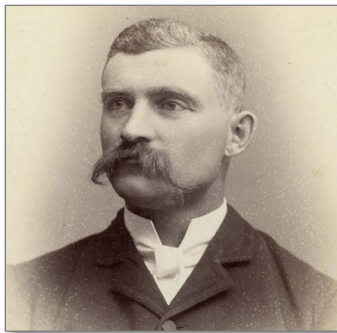


Figure 8. [John Thomas Errington]. (1885). (Source: City of Richmond Archives, Photo 1978 2 9).

John Thomas Errington was born December 14, 1853, near London, Ontario. The son of Thomas Charles Errington and Lucetta Neville, John came west to BC in 1875. The first year he hired on a farm and a lumber camp

near Granville, now Vancouver. The next year he worked for Hugh Boyd, who owned a large farm on the fertile soil of Sea Island.

In 1876, Errington purchased 210 acres of the eastern portion of Boyd's holdings, a parcel originally owned by John Brough. With half a mile of riverfront on the Middle Arm of the Fraser River, John began his life as a pioneer farmer.

In 1882, John married Frances Anne Elida (Lida) Carscallen. The Erringtons diked and drained the land, farming about 100 acres and growing fruit trees on another 50 acres, with the remaining land left lightly timbered with spruce and alders.

By 1888, the Erringtons built a large home on the property. Thomas Kidd described the Errington's house as a center of social activity. They also built a barn and dock on the river's edge. Steamers were able to load and take to market hay, potatoes, apples and other local produce while delivering farm supplies. Visitors

had a place to dock their boats as many travelled by river. While attending a New Westminster fair in 1891, John won prizes for his apples, Lida for her oil paintings.

The Erringtons donated a portion of their land for the Sea Island Presbyterian Church - the first



Figure 7. [View across the middle arm of the Fraser River, showing J.T. Errington's house and barn as well as Sea Island Presbyterian Church]. (1890). (Source: City of Richmond Archives, Photo 1977-0016-00010).

church of this denomination in the Lower Mainland. Built in New Westminster in 1886, the church took a ride down the Fraser River to the west side of the middle arm, just east of where the Moray Channel Bridge joins Sea Island on Miller Road today. The Manse can be seen behind and to the right of the church. Sadly, the church burned to the ground on April 25, 1933, and was not rebuilt.

In 1907, the Erringtons sold their Sea Island property and travelled extensively. John died in London, Ontario on August 2, 1939, and is buried in his place of birth, the Lambeth Community Cemetery, Lambeth, Middlesex County, Ontario. His wife Lida Anne died June 9, 1941, in Vancouver, British Columbia and is buried in Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, British Columbia. They had no children.

### *Why a public school with his name?*

Aside from being a prize-winning Sea Island farmer, Errington was one of the early campaigners for the incorporation of Richmond and his signature is on the petition for incorporation in 1879. He was elected to council in 1881, 1883, and 1890. His name is also on the petition to build the first bridge from the mainland to Richmond, the Marpole (or North Arm) Bridge.

Errington was a pioneer who cared about his community. He saw potential in his surroundings and was willing to try new things. He advocated for the creation of a municipality that would bring better conditions for life on the islands; for a bridge that would connect people and places. Errington's efforts are honoured by a school that bears his name.

## Answers to The Quiz and A Little Bit More

Picture 1 - Cannery Pilings

Answer: D - Swishwash Island

Swishwash Island is a small island at the mouth of the middle arm of the Fraser River. The Sea Island Cannery opened in 1889 and had 18 licensed boats, 225 employees and packed 18,225 cases of fish. It continued to flourish, however, in 1899, the cannery burned to the ground.

Picture 2 - Duck Hunting

Answer: B - Percy Bicknell

Percy Bicknell spent time on the Fraser River marshes on Sea Island and Lulu Island in the '40s & '50s, learning the flight of wild waterfowl. He became a legend of duck-hunting sport, was an excellent shot, and is known for his artistic and masterful crafting of decoys and 'punt' boats for duck hunting. He was able to call a mallard with his lips better than with artificial tools. He made beautifully and accurately painted decoys that today are still highly respected and valued.

Picture 3 - Post Tensioned Segmental Bridge

Answer: C - No. 2 Road Bridge

The No. 2 Road "post tensioned segmental" bridge was designed by PBK (Phillips Barrett Kaiser) Engineering, a local architectural/engineering firm. Related to Sea Island, PBK also designed the YVR airport in the late 1960's, the Arthur Laing bridge, the Air Canada Maintenance Hangers, the UPS Building now located on the old Cora Brown subdivision, the Bridgeport Canada Line station, and the YVR Parkade. Sea Islander Daryl Thomas proudly worked for this company as an engineer.



## In Loving Memory

Sadly, we have heard of several Sea Islanders that have passed away. Our sympathies to their families and friends.

- Scott ANDERSON (1963-2024) was Bill and Joan Anderson's son and "Brian's little brother." They lived at 160 Myron Drive in the Cora Brown subdivision on Sea Island. Scott loved to play golf with his childhood friends and was an avid Canuck fan who enjoyed playing hockey, especially with his brother, Brian. Scott will be missed by all those who knew him.
- Frederick "Fred" George EASTMAN (1950-2024) was the younger brother of Doug Eastman, one of the Society's directors. Fred was raised in Burkeville on Sea Island. He passed away in Langford, British Columbia, following a lengthy battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife Susan, and their five children.
- Harry Arthur GLUSMAN (1937-2024), known to his friends as Butch, knew about hockey cards and how to trade them. He also knew about music, telling Carol Gordon a truth, "Music says what words fail to say." Butch was a great storyteller. Butch and Grant Thompson's stories easily took us back in time to the 'good old days.' Butch will not be forgotten, especially when the music plays!
- Joy Audrey Mary HEMSWORTH (née BICKNELL) (1956-2024) was the daughter of Gordon and Mary Bicknell of 523 Edginton Avenue in Cora Brown (on Sea Island). Joy was a nurse and loved to travel the world. She was a loving partner to Joe, caring mother to Jeff and Sara, an adoring grandmother to her three grandchildren and will be greatly missed.
- Reginald "Reg" Duncan McDONALD (1944-2024) passed away May 12, 2024, just days before his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was the great grandson of pioneers Hugh and Harriet McDonald. He spent his informative years on Sea Island living and working on the family farm where he raised his family.
- Jon MOORE (1951-2024) was the son of Edgar (Bert) & Elva Moore of 469 Ferguson Road in Cora Brown on Sea Island. He was predeceased by his sister, Cheryl. Jon will be especially missed by his childhood friends who attended Sea Island Elementary, Cambie Junior High and Richmond Senior High together.

Should we have inadvertently missed someone, please let us know at [info@seaislandhome.org](mailto:info@seaislandhome.org).

## Sea Island Artifacts and Memorabilia

Over the past few months, we have had some lovely donations. Donations are welcomed and appreciated. If you are downsizing or just cleaning out those boxes from the basement or attic, anything Sea Island would be most appreciated. Contact Eunice at [eunice@genbug.ca](mailto:eunice@genbug.ca).

## Contact Us

If you have questions, comments, or want to share your memories and photos, we would love to hear from you.

To submit a letter, documents, photos, or a cheque for your membership or donation via snail mail:

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To join, renew your membership or donate by e-Transfer: [treasurersihs@seaislandhome.org](mailto:treasurersihs@seaislandhome.org)

Website: <https://seaislandhome.org>

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*"Sea Island is located within the traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh Peoples."*