

## **Press Release**

**From** the Gulf Islands Alliance (GIA)

**Subject:** GIA to host an All-Islands Gathering, **October 24, 2009** from **9 -5pm** at **GISS**

### **What can Gulf Islanders do to cope with climate change, peak oil and other challenges that threaten the resiliency of our rural island communities?**

That's the question the Gulf Islands Alliance (GIA) will ask a public gathering of islanders on October 24 at the **Gulf Islands Secondary School** (GISS) on Salt Spring Island.

It's a serious question, but organizers promise that the 'gathering' won't be gloomy. The goal is simply to encourage and celebrate the people and programs that will keep our islands a wonderful place to live and visit.

Emcee will be popular environmentalist **Briony Penn**, a Salt Spring resident, adjunct professor at the University of Victoria, writer, artist, and gumboot dancer.

Keynote speaker **Guy Dauncey** will get the busy morning started, drawing from his new book *The Climate Challenge, 101 Solutions to Global Warming*. It highlights initiatives around the world that show it's possible to reduce our carbon footprint to almost zero over the next three decades.

Then the focus will shift to our own backyard. People across the islands will share information about their grassroots sustainability projects, such as ride-sharing, community gardens, clean energy, public transit, water preservation, and educational programs on why and how to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

After lunch, **Neil Dawe**, a professional biologist with the Qualicum Institute and author of 75 scientific and popular articles on birds, ecology and the environment will talk about the real meaning of sustainability in our communities. He states boldly that if we destroy too much ecosystem structure for economic production "it could mean the end of humanity."

We will hear from the **Islands Trust** about how it intends to meet a deadline of next May, imposed on all local governments in BC, to craft community plan policies and initiate actions to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets.

And we will have a stimulating presentation by **Karen Lanphear** about her hometown Sandpoint, Idaho, one of the first North American centers to join the 'transition movement', a four-year-old initiative adopted by more than 150 towns and communities around the world. For individuals who think it's futile to undertake small measures to reduce their carbon footprint when world leaders are failing to halt the escalation of greenhouse gas emissions, the transition movement promises a way they can act effectively and truly make a difference.

Participants will then break into **smaller groups** to ponder questions such as how existing 'sustainability' groups can collaborate to tackle broader challenges, interface with governments at all levels, and engage non-active islanders in their projects and a shared vision.

To wrap up the day, a **speaker panel** helped by all participants will identify common themes and actions islanders, as individuals and groups, can take 'to rebuild resilient island communities in a time of transition'.

Fittingly, the gathering will be held on **International Climate Action Day**, an effort that's quickly gaining momentum in advance of world leaders meeting in Copenhagen in December to craft a new global treaty on cutting carbon emissions.

There will be a modest fee of \$30 for registering by October 2 (\$35 for late registration). It covers lunch, refreshments and snacks. To get to the gathering from nearby islands, GIA may organize water taxi transportation if there is sufficient interest. For people coming from more distant islands, billeting on Salt Spring could be arranged.

GIA continues to look for groups and projects to feature. If you wish to attend or have questions or suggestions about the gathering, please contact **Dave Steen, The Gulf Islands Alliance** at [info@gulfislandsalliance.ca](mailto:info@gulfislandsalliance.ca). Or 250 246-3530.

GIA is a non-profit grassroots organization with members on all Trust area islands. It's dedicated to preserving our fragile island environments, protecting our small, rural communities and ensuring the Islands Trust mandate is effectively implemented.