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Discovery Islands, Earth Islands: The Theory and Practice of Island Imagery in Environmental Thought

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Recommended Citation
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DISCOVERY ISLANDS, EARTH ISLANDS: THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ISLAND IMAGERY IN ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

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In partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Analysis, 2014-2015 academic year, Pomona College, Claremont, California

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 3

Preface 4

Introduction 7

Histories of Island Imagery

Historical Imaginings of Rapa Nui 13

Reimagining Earth Island 26

Discovery Islands Research

Introducing the Islanders 33

Islanders and the Natural World 38

Individuality and Independence 42

Fish and Forest Concerns 47

Islanders in Community 57

Islanders in Context 63

Conclusion 65

Appendices

Interview Questions 74

Maps of the Discovery Islands 75

Photography from the Discovery Islands 77

Bibliography 79

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my primary reader, Professor Zayn Kassam, who helped me set (and, inevitably, reset) workable deadlines, organize my thoughts, clarify my research goals, and reminded me what topics were not common knowledge outside the Discovery Islands and really required further explanation. Thank you to Professor Melinda Herrold-Menzies, who pushed me to better articulate my research methods, and Professor Char Miller, who talked me through several serious bouts of writer's block. Thank you to Eve Flager, Lannie Keller, and Sabina Leader Mense of the DIEM Project, Judith Wright of the Surge Narrows Community Newsletter, Richard Gillmore of the Surge Narrows Community Association, and all of my amazing interviewees across the Discovery Islands for guiding me, teaching me, and making my time on the islands so memorable and educational. Thank you to Jean Schultz and the many other generous donors who make Pomona College's Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) possible for giving me the funds I needed to make my research a full-time summer project. Thank you to my family for their encouragement and extensive logistical assistance in getting me smoothly and safely to and from rural British Columbia, to my friends for their often humorous and always heartfelt moral support, and to my peers in the EA department for making the thesis process a real community experience.

Preface

In the 1970s, my mother's family followed the era's particular war and environmental issue-driven migrant flow known as the "back-to-the-land movement" and emigrated from central California to the remote British Columbian island of Read, a part of the Discovery Island archipelago, accompanied by another family from their neighborhood. Upon arrival, the two households doubled the island's population, joining a community so small it has neither a grocery store nor a ferry service, though it does boast Canada's only remaining floating post office, built directly onto the local dock. Though none of my relatives live there year-round today, it is a place that has left its mark on a number of people close to me, and sticks in my memory as an engaging site of wilderness exploration during my own childhood.

Communal memories of my family and the role they played in island social and political life from the 1970s onward created a context in which I could return to the islands and start conversations with back-to-the-landers and other recent arrivals to the Discovery Islands. When a family friend from the area suggested I come visit in the summer and help her with a locally run mapping project, the seeds of my thesis began to sprout. The Discovery Islands would become a research site where I could explore how islanders relate to environmental issues – what draws them to island life, and how islands shape their understandings of the environment, globally and locally. Through collecting narratives of island life in the context of environmental work, perhaps I could find what I felt was lacking in the metaphorical discussions of islands I was being exposed to at college.

Spending a summer on Read (with sojourns on its nearest neighbors) helped me form impactful connections with both the place and the people of the Discovery Islands.[1] It was my first time back on the islands as an adult, and I found myself meeting and re-meeting people I had only been aware of from the perspective of a child. Dynamics like food preparation and transportation were no longer things I could engage in only when it interested me, but became regular and recurring adult responsibilities. When I wasn't running interviews with local residents, I was cooking, cleaning the sporadically lived-in house, stacking firewood, preparing garden beds, learning to drive an ATV, and occasionally even hauling buckets of human waste layered with sawdust to the compost shed (we called it humanure). Two months with my mother and grandmother as housemates in a cabin with no phone or Internet service, no septic system, no refrigerator, a propane generator and a single small solar panel for electricity, and water heated only through a passive solar coil on sunny afternoons helped me develop a deeper sense of my connection to the environment. I had never before been pushed to engage with the natural world around me so directly.

In a manner that I feel slightly foolish for not anticipating, the simple fact of living on Read, even temporarily, helped to expand my understanding of the mechanics of island life and the ways that the natural world makes itself unavoidable. Go away for a year, and you'll return to salmonberry vines climbing up the side of your house, deer wandering the overgrown garden through the holes they've chewed in fence netting. You are part of this ecosystem too, the island reminds you. Human occupancy is a constant balancing act of landscape management, and there are few places where that insight is more apparent than

[1] I was on the Discovery Islands from June 15 to July 27, 2014, primarily on Read Island.

here. There is no pavement or grocery store to distance you from the soil you walk on and cultivate for much of your food. Every store-bought piece of produce or can of propane you obtain will have to be carried from its point of purchase to your boat, then taken across the water back to your own island, and then moved up from the dock over land to your home. The island has no landfill or recycling center – most non-biodegradable trash must be taken off island for processing. In a very direct and recordable way, you must be aware of your own resource use on a level not common on the mainland.

All of these qualities help make the Discovery Islands a rich and engaging resource site for exploring the life philosophies of modern-day islanders, and understanding how the logistics of island life affect residents' relationships to each other and to the broader natural world. Descriptions of "islandness" from the perspective of literal islanders can help illuminate the limits of academic theories about island life and highlight the useful consistencies between theory and practice, producing a more complex and applicable set of rhetorical tools to bring into play when describing the island qualities of planet Earth.

Introduction

From Darwin's observations of Galapagos finches to Bahn and Flenley's analysis of culturally mediated environmental change on Rapa Nui, researchers in fields from biology to anthropology have found fertile academic soil in the study of islands. Cultural and biological processes seem to be affected by the scale and isolation a small island provides, creating a distinct context for new physical and social understandings of the world to develop. As a result, small islands have a rich mythical and tangible history across many times and places.

"Earth Island" is one of the concepts that have sprung out of such research, approaching islands as symbols of the bounded nature of our planet. This analogy posits that if excessive and ill-managed resource use pushes past the limits that Earth can sustain, than all of us on this "island" will feel the results. If we hold a deeper awareness of our "islandness" and use that to guide our environmental relationships, then perhaps we can become responsible islanders who respect and value the community we cultivate together. Though there is a certain interesting resonance to images of islands as symbols for all of Earth, much of the Earth Island analogy is formed around historical or theoretical island spaces. Bahn and Flenley, key early players in the Earth Island narrative, have based their work largely on archeological and geological studies of Rapa Nui (Easter Island). They concern themselves with the island's bygone era of stone statue construction and subsequent environmental degradation rather than with the dynamics of its present population. The image they build rests largely on a narrative of fear and caution, one in which the early people of Rapa Nui did not respect the boundaries of their island's resources and suffered as a result, creating a cautionary tale for current and future

generations to heed. Their perspective on the island has often been complicated by competing anthropological narratives around the causes of Rapa Nui's decline. On the whole, the Earth Island analogy is a vivid and engaging one, but it depends on a heavily contested anthropological narrative and a significant element of fear mongering in order to operate.

This and related approaches to describing the earth as bounded in its capacity focus on fear and dire warnings and deemphasize community connectivity and the impacts of globalization, potentially to their own detriment. As someone with deep personal and familial connections to certain islands, it occurred to me that there could be different, more present day-oriented, communal, and positive approaches to island analogy building. There is already a substantial history of such images among many indigenous communities across the globe, which they continue to apply to their spiritual and environmental practices today. Approaching this idea through the context of my own family, I felt that perhaps the spatial, social, and ecological dynamics that develop on small islands in particular could have something to offer the larger field of research and analysis around the concept of islandness. The specific site that inspired me to explore this theory was, unsurprisingly, Read Island.

The Discovery Islands, of which Read is a part, form an archipelago that runs along the west coast of Canada, a group of around a dozen major islands and numerous smaller islets clustered between the British Columbian mainland and the larger island of Vancouver.[2] The two most populous islands in the chain are Quadra, a 35-km-long island

[2] "Welcome to the Discovery Islands", *Discovery Islands*, http://discoveryislands.ca/guide/pages/page_3.html (last modified January 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014).

boasting a population of about 2,700 full-time residents,[3] and Cortes, which takes second place in size at 25 km long and is home to about 1,000 people.[4] Read, Stuart, Maurelle and the Redonda Islands collectively comprise the less populous "Outer Islands," several supporting fewer than 100 residents each.[5] Life on the Discovery Islands reflects the particular histories of migration that brought past and current islanders to the region. Initially the home of multiple First Nations communities including the Lekwiltok, Coast Salish, and Kwa'Kwa'Ka'Wa'Kw, Captain Vancouver's exploration of the islands in 1792, in the words of the regional guidebook, "heralded the beginning of British colonial expansion onto the west coast of Canada and the region hasn't been the same since."[6] Logging, fishing, and prospecting drew waves of colonists into the region throughout the late 1800s, causing the deaths and relocations of many indigenous peoples, and irrevocably transforming the ethnic, cultural, and environmental structure of the islands.[7] Logging and commercial fishing industries still have a place in the Discovery Islands, but locally oriented tourism options like whale watching, sea kayaking, sport fishing, and gallery tours featuring indigenous artists have all gained increasing precedence as timber and seafood availability decline due to histories of heavy consumption.[8]

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[3] "Quadra Island", *Discovery Islands*, http://discoveryislands.ca/guide/pages/page_10.html (last modified January 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014).

[4] "Cortes Island", *Discovery Islands*, http://discoveryislands.ca/guide/pages/page_22.html (last modified January 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014).

[5] "Welcome to the Discovery Islands", *Discovery Islands*, http://discoveryislands.ca/guide/pages/page_3.html (last modified January 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014).

[6] "Campbell River," *Discovery Islands*, http://discoveryislands.ca/guide/pages/page_6.html (last modified January 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014).

[7] Ibid.

[8] "Campbell River," *Discovery Islands*, http://discoveryislands.ca/guide/pages/page_7.html (last modified January 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014).

Since European arrival, the islands have tended to attract, in the words of seasonal resident Grant Lawrence, "a certain type of individual" who sees the rough rural landscape as "the final destination, the land beyond the map – a place of hope, refuge, hiding, and escape."[9] The Vietnam War and the political energy it generated served as the catalyst for a particular migrant wave that rippled across the islands in the late 1960s and 1970s and became known as the back-to-the-land movement. The region "was suddenly a sought-after destination for draft dodgers and commune idealists hoping to live by the rhythm of nature"[10] who saw the Discovery Islands and its neighboring regions as sources of "adventure and change,"[11] safety from the war, and a chance to develop new life skills and rituals suited to rural island existence.

The *Whole Earth Catalog*, a publication "remembered best as the bible of the back-to-the-land movement," influenced a number of migrants to the British Columbian coast.[12] Published regularly between 1968 and 1972, the *Catalog* primarily consisted of product reviews in the categories of "Understanding Whole Systems, Shelter and Land Use, Industry and Craft, Communications, Community, Nomadics, [and] Learning," with the goal of giving interested readers information about "the best tools" they could access in developing a new countercultural, land and nature-focused lifestyle.[13] Haida Gwaii, another British Columbian island chain north of the Discovery Islands, was even specially featured in a

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[9] Grant Lawrence, *Adventures in Solitude: What Not to Wear to a Nude Potluck and Other Stories from Desolation Sound* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Pub., 2010), 68.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Lou Allison, *Gumboot Girls: Adventure, Love & Survival on British Columbia's North Coast : A Collection of Memoirs* (Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press, 2014), 12.
[12] Andrew G. Kirk, "The Whole Earth Catalog, New Games and Urban Environmentalism," in *Cities and Nature in the American West* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2010), 243.
[13] "How the Whole Earth Process Worked," *Whole Earth Catalog Stay Hungry Stay Foolish*, http://wholeearth.com/history-how-it-worked.php (accessed November 11, 2014).

supplement to the Catalog in 1969, which cited the area as a promising site for "farming and self-sufficient living."[14] This new generation of occupants added another demographic dimension to a region largely populated by the descendants of the 1800s loggers, fishers, and prospectors, coexisting to varying degrees with the remaining local First Nations peoples.

My research on the Discovery Islands largely reflects this particular moment of demographic shift. With a subject base largely formed around emigrants of the back-to-the-land era and their children, a largely white and relatively low-income group, my interview compilation is a snapshot of some of the most recent generations of islanders. As they mainly chose to move to the Discovery Islands as adults, the presence of my interviewees in the region speaks to the interesting draw of island life – a slough of economic, political, and even philosophical factors that converged to bring them where they are today. Though the exact methods and location of my thesis research are quite specific in form, studies of the nature of island communities have a rich and extensive history spanning across a range of disciplines.

The following chapter will outline the work of the researchers whose ideas motivated me to pursue my own particular form of island research. After providing historical background on earlier island research projects of note, I will focus on critiquing previously established approaches to images like Earth Island. My goal is to suggest a reframing of such analogies towards themes that are positive, generative, and can serve as clearer building blocks for developing further theories around more sustainable environmental life practices.

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[14] Lou Allison, *Gumboot Girls: Adventure, Love & Survival on British Columbia's North Coast : A Collection of Memoirs* (Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press, 2014), 12.

Once this historical grounding is established, I will move into an analysis of my original research on the Discovery Islands. After outlining my interview process and providing some general data about my interviewees, I will work through the themes that appeared across their interviews, dividing the analysis by topic and supporting the importance of each theme with pertinent interview quotes. Background on local ecological, industrial, and political structures is provided as needed in order to place quotes in their proper context. My interest is not to prove some underlying truth about all Discovery Islanders, but rather to demonstrate common traits and concerns among them that can be used to better inform processes of island analogy building by grounding them in the lived experiences of islanders today.

Finally, I will pull the two sections together, reflecting on what the voices of islanders from the Discovery Islands and elsewhere can offer to the wider discourse of environmental theory. The themes evidenced by my interviewees will be approached as building blocks in the project of reconstructing a more useful Earth Island analogy, one that thinks critically about what islandness entails in the context of an increasingly interconnected, globalizing world. Hopefully, the work I do here can help support future projects and explorations of the ways islands are used as tools and symbols in environmental thought.

Histories of Island Imagery

<u>Historical Imaginings of Rapa Nui</u>

Islands are powerful generative sites of metaphor, narrative, and imagination. Notably popular in reflections on the world through epic and fantasy, like Homer's *Odyssey* or LeGuin's *Tales of Earthsea*, literal islands also have an important role to play in people's personal and global narratives of place. As the island life stories others and I have collected from across the Pacific[15] and Atlantic[16] in recent decades demonstrate, islands stir up a range of positive and tumultuous feelings that draw many to share tales of their own sense of islandness. The ways that island life can shape people's identities, cultural perspectives, and lifestyles are well worth exploring.

Anthropologists have a notable history of interest in islands as sites of study, their physically bounded nature and the distinct "local social, economic, and cultural systems" that such limits and isolation supposedly generate giving them a distinctness that appeals to the researcher's eye.[17] Margaret Mead's accounts of vast cultural differences between different New Guinean societies, though heavily contested on multiple fronts from the anthropological to the feminist[18] since their initial publication in 1935, if nothing else still speak to the power of such distinctness as a descriptive tool in research.[19] The concept of the community isolate, demonstrating a radically different worldview from even its neighbors in the same river basin, appeared to strike a chord. The image of the hugely

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[15] Gillian Cambers, "Islanders' Perspectives on Sustainable Living," *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1, (2006): 125-142.

[16] Philip Conkling, "On Islanders and Islandness," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007): 191.

[17] Karen Fog Olwig, "Islands As Places Of Being And Belonging," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007): 260.

[18] Betty Friedan, "The Functional Freeze, The Feminine Protest, and Margaret Mead" in *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1963).

[19] Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, (New York: W. Morrow & Co., 1935).

varied gender roles and relationships to violence in Arapesh, Mungomor, and Tchambuli communities has endured even when critiqued, and led to the printing of multiple editions of Mead's text. Her work is far from the only exploration of island communities to gain interest across multiple disciplines. Easter Island, or Rapa Nui, has captured the attention of anthropologists and others with a particular fervor, serving as fruitful ground for theorizing and curious speculation on its history. Rapa Nui's artistic and spiritual energy as expressed through the creation of the tall stone statues called *moai* and the ecosystem instabilities that followed this era of creation have been spun into an arresting narrative of foolish excess and social collapse. Environmental theorists such as Paul Bahn, John Flenley, and Jared Diamond have all drawn from anthropological studies of Rapa Nui to construct a narrative of "Earth Island." This image is intended as a hyper-cautionary tale against the dangers of overextending our reach as a species, pushing the boundaries of our planet too far and reaping environmental destruction in return.

To understand why Rapa Nui captures the interest of so many researchers and environmental theorists, some background on the island's history and geography is in order. The island is 66 miles square and has an elevation of about 1,670 feet, and owes its origin to the eruptions of the three volcanoes Poike, Rano Kau, and Terevaka.[20] Characterized as "uncommonly remote," Rapa Nui is one of the most physically isolated places in the world, with its closest neighbors being Pitcairn Island 1,200 miles to the west and Chile 2,200 miles to the east,[21] far too distant to pursue the trade relationships

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[20] Jared M. Diamond, "Twilight at Easter", *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005), 83.

[21] "Easter Island", *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/176886/Easter-Island (accessed October 24, 2014).

common on other Pacific islands during its early history as a human settlement.[22] Chile annexed the island in 1888,[23] and it is now a province of Chile's Valparaíso Region and a registered UNESCO World Heritage Site.[24] Accounts of the island's first human settlement vary, as they have been variously calculated using multiple methods of radiocarbon dating, primarily performed on charcoal samples. These tests have led researchers over the years to produce a range of conclusions about the date of first settlement, from 400[25] to 900[26] to 1200 C.E.[27] The 1200 C.E. date range in particular stands in contrast to some earlier assumptions about the island's history. The research team that most heavily supports this newer estimate asserts that while it is possible "that the initial population was small and had little environmental impact" over the first several hundred years of settlement, it is also worth entertaining the possibility "that humans simply did not arrive [on Rapa Nui] until about 800 years ago."[28] In any case, the fact that there is an evolving range of research around the island's settlement chronology speaks to the complexities of studying Rapa Nui, and the different techniques and core assumptions that researchers have used to guide their investigations.

Equally under discussion is the origin of environmental change on the island, particularly with regards to its extensive deforestation. Bahn, Flenley, and Diamond all

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[22] Patrick D. Nunn, "Nature-Society Interactions in the Pacific Islands," *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 85, no. 4 (2003): 224-225.
[23] "Easter Island", *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/176886/Easter-Island (accessed October 24, 2014).
[24] "Rapa Nui National Park," *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*, http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/715 (accessed October 24, 2014).
[25] Terry Hunt, "Rethinking The Fall Of Easter Island," *American Scientist* 94 (2006): 414.
[26] Jared M. Diamond, "Twilight at Easter," in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 89.
[27], Carl P. Lipo and Terry L. Hunt, "Mapping Prehistoric Statue Roads on Easter Island," *Antiquity* 79, no. 303 (2005): 158-68.
[28]Terry Hunt, "Rethinking The Fall Of Easter Island," *American Scientist* 94 (2006): 416.

present a relatively anthropocentric account of changes in Rapa Nui's forests, marking human action as the core, deciding factor in the decline of the island's palm trees. Mature specimens of Rapa Nui's now extinct native palms would have stood over 65 feet tall in their day, with trunks 7 feet and greater in diameter, making them one of the tallest palm species in the world.[29] In the human impact-focused narrative, they were logged up to the point of drastic deforestation through their extensive use in creating the log rollers, levers, heavy ropes, and other materials needed to transport and erect *moai*, the massive stone statues that still feature heavily in cultural images of the island today.[30] As resource availability declined and the island's population peaked, the tensions of environmental change and its associated food scarcity led to increased violence between islanders and changes in the spiritual focus of their lives. *Moai* building declined, some of the statues and bases even being toppled and smashed, and new "military leaders called *matatoa*" seized power around 1680, justifying their ascent through the creation of a new religious order that venerated "the creator god Makemake" above others in the preexisting local pantheon.[31] Already living in an environment of scarcity and increased violence, the islanders were further decimated by European influence from the late 18th century onwards. Explorers, slave traders, and missionaries introduced disease, kidnapped locals, and pushed against local cultural and spiritual practices.

Other researchers have argued against elements of this narrative. Though the fact that the island was deforested is incontestable, there are multiple interpretations of how this extensive ecosystem change came to pass. Terry Hunt, Carl Lipo, and Patrick Nunn

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[29] Jared M. Diamond, "Twilight at Easter," in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed,* (New York: Viking, 2005), 103.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 109-111.

prioritize nonhuman impacts like climate change and the consumption of palm seeds by rats in the decline of Rapa Nui's forests. Hunt's narrative also contests assumptions about when humans arrived on the island, suggesting a shorter residential time frame with less intense impacts. He believes that 1200 C.E. is the most likely date of initial human settlement on Rapa Nui, as supported by the research he conducted with Lipo. Within "this version of events, the human population never grew much larger than about 3,000, and rats played a dominant role in the deforestation" by eating palm seeds and preventing them from germinating, contesting the claim that overpopulation was a factor in the overuse of timber.[32] He focuses on the work of paleobotanists in charting "the destructive effect of rats on native vegetation" across a range of islands, noting that their removal can support the recovery of native plants and that in similarly isolated but rat-free environments like "the northwest Hawaiian Islands … the island's native vegetation still survives despite prehistoric human settlement."[33] His interpretation also places a heavier emphasis on "the arrival of Europeans" as a trigger for cultural and population decline on the island, though this factor is not absent from other narratives.[34]

Patrick Nunn has conducted broader analysis of early human-nature interactions across the Pacific Islands, with a critical eye turned towards earlier research and its narratives of extreme human-initiated environmental change. He is especially wary of descriptions of early human settlement that focus on "the idea that the earliest humans … routinely burn[ed] forests upon arriving on a 'new' island" and critiques the interpretation of "massive charcoal band[s] … within a sediment sequence" as signs of forest burning and,

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[32] Terry Hunt, "Rethinking The Fall Of Easter Island," *American Scientist* 94 (2006): 418.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

implicitly, of human occupation.[35] He says this style of arrival time calculation creates a circular argument, where "humans arrive, burn the forest, create a charcoal band, which is [then used as] evidence for human arrival."[36] This line of reasoning "cannot be independently validated" because it refers only to itself, and does not acknowledge the possible existence of "a natural fire regime" on a given island, and which would provide an alternate explanation for the heavy presence of charcoal.[37] Nunn is concerned by the ways that narratives around human behavior in early settlements appear limited in scope.

Nunn explores more "modern studies of rural nature–society interactions" in the Pacific to support his assertion that early human settlement on the islands would have primarily caused "mere 'marginal disruptions' for island ecosystems."[38] He references the findings of a "study of the Ewa Plain on O'ahu Island in Hawaii," in which researchers concluded that the first human settlers arrived in the region in small numbers, practiced relatively responsible husbandry of their "visibly limited resources, and therefore caus[ed] little deliberate environmental change."[39] They did not practice forest burning or extensive clearing, and rats caused far more extensive impacts on forest health than humans. In fact, the initiation of lowland forest death by rats created ripple effects, with native birds dying out "not by direct rat (or human) predation," but by the loss of their locally endemic forest habitat.[40] Human settlement of deforested regions thereafter was made possible by rats, rather than by intentional burning or other methods of forest clearance.

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[35] Patrick D. Nunn, "Nature-Society Interactions in the Pacific Islands," *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 85, no. 4 (2003): 222.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

Nunn also cites the importance of climate change in understanding the environmental history of the Pacific Basin, and Rapa Nui in particular. He highlights the concept of the "AD 1300 Event," which he and other researches have described as a period of "rapid cooling … sea-level fall, and possibly … increased storminess" in the Pacific Basin that began around 1300 CE and lasted for roughly a century.[41] Since coastal lowlands, "nearshore coral reefs," and lagoons were all important zones of food production and gathering for Pacific Islanders in this era, a drop in sea level would massively damage the stability of the ecosystems that fed them and precipitate cultural change.[42] Nunn feels that for Rapa Nui in particular, the island's early inhabited era, in which food was plentiful, conflict scarce, and *moai*-building common, and its later era of increased violence and scarcity can be divided chronologically by the effects of the AD 1300 Event.[43] The range of effects that Nunn posits were caused by the AD 1300 Event is not universally agreed upon. Scott Fitzpatrick suggests that Nunn's "archaeological data have been selected to fit a proposed model, versus testing a model using the broader spectrum of empirical data available," and should be taken with a grain of salt.[44] While Fitzpatrick concedes that his analysis of Nunn's claims about climate change in the Palauan archipelago "does not preclude climate change around AD 1300 from possibly influencing societies elsewhere in the Pacific," he cautions against prioritizing the AD 1300 Event over other social and/or environmental explanations for 14th century cultural change in the Pacific Basin.[45]

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41 Patrick D. Nunn, "Nature-Society Interactions in the Pacific Islands," *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 85, no. 4 (2003): 223.
42 Ibid., 224-225.
43 Ibid.
44 Scott M. Fitzpatrick, "A Critique of the 'AD 1300 Event', with Particular Reference to Palau," *Journal of Pacific Archaeology* 1, no. 2 (2010): 172.
45 Ibid.

Building a clear, uncontested account of the reasons for environmental and cultural change on Rapa Nui is not possible without being staggeringly vague. Human-driven resource use, overpopulation, the introduction of other invasive species (particularly rats), climate change, and disease and attacks from European travelers have all been cited as potential causes of the island's decline in vegetation and population. Many of the researchers who critique others' interpretations of the history of Rapa Nui disagree on the degree of impact each of these factors had, rather than discounting them entirely. Those who lean heavily towards anthropocentric interpretations and those who favor environmental determining factors have been critiquing each other's research methods and data sets for over twenty years, and it is hard to say whether a more consistently accepted narrative will emerge even within the next twenty. How, then, is it best to approach the complex and constantly rewritten story of Rapa Nui, especially when one version of its decline has a powerful history of use as a cautionary tale of environmental catastrophe?

Bahn and Flenley believe that the isolated location and distinct ecological changes evidenced on Rapa Nui make it an interesting "microcosm of our own world," a tool for understanding broader global human-environment relationships.[46] They urge humankind as a whole to "consider the parallels between their interpretation of the behavior of the Easter Islanders in relation to their limited resources and our cavalier disregard for our own fragile natural environment: the earth itself."[47] This, then, is the classic view of "Earth Island" – our planet imagined in a way that makes us more aware of its boundaries, the

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[46] Paul G. Bahn and John Flenley, *Easter Island, Earth Island*, (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 9.
[47] Ibid.

profound human impacts on its stability, and the potentially devastating consequences of resource misuse.

Jared Diamond builds on these anxieties, arguing that Rapa Nui's environmental collapse as "the closest approximation that we have to an ecological disaster unfolding in complete isolation."[48] Like Bahn and Flenley, he largely attributes the degradation of Rapa Nui's land and the loss of its forests to irresponsible management decisions by the islanders themselves. He echoes and expands on their question about the loss of the island's final tree, putting his musings in the context of more modern issues of resource use.

> What did the Easter Islander who cut down the last palm tree say while he was doing it? Like modern loggers, did he shout "Jobs, not trees!"? Or: "Technology will solve our problems, never fear, we'll find a substitute for wood"? Or: "We don't have proof that there aren't palms somewhere else on Easter, we need more research, your proposed ban on logging is premature and driven by fear-mongering"? Similar questions arise for every society that has inadvertently damaged its environment.[49]

While Diamond's imagery is arresting, the utility of the "last tree on Easter Island" as a symbolic critique of resource use issues today is questionable. Layering modern language and narratives around logging over a human-nature relationship in a culturally and technologically distinct historical moment risks oversimplifying the complex interplay of factors in Rapa Nui's environmental decline, as the rich and tumultuous debate over these influences demonstrates.

Earth Island is not the only environmental image to draw inspiration from the bounded qualities and limited resources associated with islands, though like Earth Island, such alternate images also have limits to their applicability. Lifeboat ethics and spaceship

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[48] Jared M. Diamond, "Twilight at Easter," in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed,* (New York: Viking, 2005), 82.
[49] Ibid., 114.

earth are also images that also explore potential responses to environmental crises through a focus on earth's limits and boundaries. Garrett Hardin first articulated the concept of "lifeboat ethics" in his 1974 paper of the same name, subtitled "The Case Against Helping the Poor."[50] Hardin's analysis here is largely in reference to "spaceship earth," a sibling concept to Earth Island that, like island imagery, seeks to "persuade countries, industries, and people to stop wasting and polluting our natural resources" in light of the limited sustainable resource base we share as a planet through an image of all people as fellow passengers on a spaceship. He proposes a lifeboat as an alternative to these images, asserting that it more clearly reflects the "limited … carrying capacity" of the earth and the impossibility of creating equitable resource distribution that gives everyone equal opportunities to survive and thrive – a state of affairs which he believes justifies refusing aid to communities and nations who are facing heavier environmental stresses than his own. From his view, the citizens of the most environmentally responsible nations are sitting stably in a lifeboat while others are "swimming in the water outside, begging for admission to our boat or for handouts." These outsiders, who he specifically casts as residents of "poor nations" who are reproducing "more than twice as fast as the rich" and thus represent a future of even heavier resource use, cannot be allowed into the lifeboat lest an attempt to support them capsizes the entire structure.[51]

What this approach disregards is the interconnectivity between environmental conditions across the globe, especially as enacted through processes of economic globalization. The economic stability of Hardin's "rich nations" cannot be fully understood outside the context of confounding factors like colonialism and free trade. If the prosperity

[50] Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor," *Psychology Today,* (1974).
[51] Ibid.

of one nation is largely predicated on the use of resources extracted from another nation, is it fair to categorize the receiving nation as inherently more environmentally stable? On a related note, if one nation has a stable population but consumes a sharply increasing amount of goods and produces an increasing amount of waste per capita over time, does it make sense to class its citizens as more environmentally responsible than citizens of a nation with a growing population that consumes comparatively little per capita? Hardin seems to suggest that those in power within current economic systems have a responsibility to keep the economically disadvantaged out of the lifeboat, but does not address how this formulation sets up power as a source of moral authority and worth, even if he claims there is no moral element to the logic of who is in the lifeboat. In his suggested policy, representatives of nations that benefit from current economic conditions are "in the lifeboat," and are therefore given the authority to judge how worthy others are of survival.[52] They determine who to let in or let drown, drawing the boundaries of who belongs within the global human community of the future.

Like Earth Island, Hardin's lifeboat ethics revolve around fears of ecological collapse and the negative elements of environmental change. He promotes an economically divisive view of what human community should look like, and whom people should think of as their peers and rightful co-residents on the planet. This perspective allows him to assign differing degrees of value to people of different backgrounds. Inside the lifeboat are members of wealthy nations with relatively stable population sizes, and outside in the water are people from places poorer both in money and resources, their populations climbing upwards. In making his argument by numbers alone, Hardin is able to assert that

[52] Ibid.

regions with more stable populations and economies are less likely to increase their environmental impact over time and imbalance his imaginary lifeboat. He believes that moral concerns about leaving people out of the lifeboat are irrelevant, because it is incapable of holding everyone, meaning that the "complete justice" of total inclusion would create the "complete catastrophe" of capsizing, a.k.a. environmental collapse. If people find this morally abhorrent, he suggests that should get out and "yield their place to others," and eventually only those able to accept the need to exclude people from the lifeboat will survive.[53] This approach does not present a heartening image of the future, or make lifeboat ethics a metaphorical tool likely to be taken up by any but the most economically privileged.

Still, in spite of the limits of Earth Island and related metaphors of limits and bounded-ness, it is clear that islands can be used to generate metaphors that capture people's attention and interest in potentially productive ways. The goals of the Earth Island analogy are easy to understand in the context of our world today, where the harvesting of timber and other natural resources involves a physical scale and scope of equipment far beyond anything imaginable on Rapa Nui in the 1300s. Understanding the stresses that humans put on the planet and restructuring modern human-nature relationships to account for such concerns is a noble and worthwhile goal.

Why, then, does Earth Island remain a vague, generalized, and often overworked analogy? Using Rapa Nui as its core example site means depending on a narrative constructed using extensively contested archaeological research. What would it look like to build new analogies of islandness, using data collected directly from residents of small

[53] Ibid.

islands in the modern day? How can we articulate what it means to think of the earth as an island in a more detailed, multidimensional way, a way that helps us build effective social and political toolkits for supporting positive environmental change?

Reimagining Earth Island

The research I conducted on British Columbia's Discovery Islands is my attempt to fashion a more thoughtful, relevant environmental analogies about islands. Because it is time to move away from the cautionary tale energy of Earth Island, I want to help generate more positive, active imagery about how people on and off islands can think about their relationships to the staggeringly vast, yet strangely bounded planet that we share.

Bahn, Flenley, and Diamond's use of Earth Island, not to mention Hardin's lifeboat ethics, focus on imagery of foolishness, overconsumption, and a lack of control. Their descriptions of Rapa Nui suggest an island environment where local people were not properly aware of how their resource use would affect the balance of their ecosystem, and paid a harsh price for such ignorance. This disturbing sense of disconnection between human desire and the limits of their broader environment stands in sharp contrast to the conclusions I and a few other researchers have developed through interviews and other forms of investigation into the lives of modern islanders around the globe, which have turned up themes of close spiritual, social, and political connectivity to the natural world, often acting as buffers against environmental damage. Relationships between islanders and their environment(s) form a complex and fertile field of study stretching far beyond archaeological analyses of Rapa Nui's history. In fact, the entire "academic field now commonly referred to as 'Island Studies' has developed in an attempt to understand and account for the nature, dynamics and diversities of islands and islanders (and their relation

to non-island entities)."[54] Island Studies and the fields it is in conversation can help inform the creation of new island analogies.

To engage usefully with the environmental analogies and associated political tools island communities can offer the world, it is necessary to address the concept of islandness. The term has been largely popularized by the writer John Fowles, especially through his books *The Magus*, a novel set on a Greek island,[55] and *Islands*,[56] which blends analysis of islands in literature with a photo-illustrated love letter of sorts to the Scillies, the island chain that has captured Fowles' heart the most strongly. To further expand on the meaning of islandness, Philip Conkling, the founder of Maine's Island Institute,[57] summarizes:

> Islanders from different archipelagoes share a sense of islandness that transcends the particulars of local island culture. Islandness is a metaphysical sensation that derives from the heightened experience that accompanies physical isolation. Islandness is reinforced by boundaries of often frightening and occasionally impassable bodies of water that amplify a sense of a place that is closer to the natural world because you are in closer proximity to your neighbors.[58]

Conkling views the general quality of islandness as one factor that allows island communities to endure in the face of physical isolation and economic pressures from mainland industrial and cultural centers. Though generally a trait of native islanders and long-time residents, he finds that visitors can also experience islandness to a degree. George Putz further supports this assertion, noting how those who "convert" to islandness have the potential to "burn with a harder flame for island institutions and values than does

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[54] "An Introduction to Island Culture Studies," *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* 1, no. 1 (2007): 1.
[55] John Fowles, *The Magus*, (New York: Random House, 1965).
[56] John Fowles and Fay Godwin, *Islands*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978).
[57] "About Us," *Island Institute*, http://www.islandinstitute.org/about.php (accessed December 7, 2014).
[58] Philip Conkling, "On Islanders and Islandness," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007): 191.

the natal experience," as they must make a conscious choice to adopt the "motifs, images, and values" of their chosen island community.[59]

What, then, are these values that shape the experience of islandness? In the inaugural issue of the *Island Journal*, George Putz listed the characteristics he had observed as largely common to islanders as follows:

> "*Independence* – small boats and social circles demand it if a personality is to survive.
> *Loyalty* – ultimate mutual care and generosity, even between ostensible enemies.
> A strong sense of *honor*, easily betrayed.
> Polydextrous and multifaceted competence, or what islanders call *handiness*.
> A belligerent sense of *competition*, interlaced with vigilant *cooperation*.
> Traditional *frugality* with bursts of spectacular exception.
> Earthy *common sense*.
> Opinionated *machismo* in both the male and female mode.
> Live-and-let-live *tolerance of eccentricity*.
> Fragile *discretion* within a welter of gossip.
> Highly individualized blends of *spirituality* and *superstition*.
> A complex *oral tradition*, with long memories fueled by a mix of responsible record keeping and nostalgia.
> And finally, a canny *literacy* and *intelligence*."[60] [emphasis and formatting in the original]

Similar themes of common sense and independence – especially "a willingness to try to solve their problems themselves" – are demonstrated as notable islander traits in Gillian Cambers' research on Pacific island community concerns through the UNESCO-funded *Small Islands Voice* initiative.[61] Cambers' research goal was to determine "some specific characteristics that identify islanders in their approaches to everyday living," producing a thoughtfully organized collection of conclusions about the nature of islands and

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59 George Putz, "On Islands," *Island Journal* 1, no. 1 (1984): 26.
60 Ibid.
61 Gillian Cambers, "Islanders' Perspectives on Sustainable Living," *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1, (2006): 125-142.

islandness.[62] Cambers and Putz's observations from across different decades closely parallel my conclusions about the cultural commonalities of Discovery Islanders. In addition to echoing the common sense and independence themes also observed by Cambers, traits such as rugged individualism, handiness in a range of skill sets, complexly intimate physical and spiritual relationships to nature, and close community ties extending even across social and political difference are all reflected in Putz's understanding of islanders. And, lining up with my own conclusions once again, Putz believes that these traits can form useful guidelines for broader human relationships to the environment, both on and off islands. He sees islanders as possessing "an intact vision of the world" distinct from other visions "which offers not merely diversity and its advantages, but a sensibility about the world that the world could use since citizens everywhere are coming to realize that the earth itself is an island."[63] Here, then, is a different approach to Earth Island, one that centers less on images of fear and destruction and more on positive and generative interrelationships between people and their environment.

Community and global island imagery has an extensive indigenous history that must be considered when altering or expand on island-based metaphors. Duane Champagne, a UCLA professor of Sociology, American Indian Studies, and Law who is part of the "Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa … in north central North Dakota"[64] and has written extensively on indigenous history, culture, and politics in the United States, elaborates on this history of islands as spiritual symbols and descriptors for the earth.

> Most American Indian communities derive their social and political institutions from creation teachings. In many teachings, the Creator or a powerful being (such as

[62] Ibid.

[63] George Putz, "On Islands," *Island Journal* 1, no. 1 (1984): 29.

[64] Duane Champagne, *Notes from the Center of Turtle Island* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2010), viii.

> Sky Woman in the northeastern nations) brings the Earth, or Turtle Island, into being – not necessarily out of nothing as in the Christian world-origin teachings, but creating a new order and purpose out of existing elements such as land and water. The world is set in order so that that people can live and maintain relations with the plants, animals, and cosmic powers in the universe. Often there is an original covenant relation in the early teachings. If the people respect and honor relations with other forces and beings of the cosmos, then the people will receive the Creator's protection, and prosper. Disrupting relations with other beings and powers invites disaster.[65]

Respecting the interrelationships between humans and the other beings of the earth is a theme that has endured far past the time of creation stories and seems poised to continue in use, particularly in Native-led environmental movement work. Daniel Wildcat, a faculty member at Haskell Indian Nations University's School of American Indian Studies and a member of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma, supports Duane Champagne's points on the importance of relationships to the maintenance and expansion of sound cultural and political policies that protect and respect the earth.[66] He believes that "in order to live well on this planet," we need to cultivate "knowledge that is borne of a keen attentiveness to the relations and relationships we humans are surrounded by and in which we participate."[67] The key takeaway he has gathered from listening to his indigenous elders is that humankind is "just one small part, albeit it an important one, of life on this planet," and that we need to "really recognize this crucial point and examine its implications" in thinking about how we relate to the earth and address the problems facing our species and planet today.[68] He wants indigenous values to be a learning tool for cultivating greater respect for

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[65] Ibid., 46.
[66] Paul Racette, "Geoscience and Traditional Knowledge: An Interview with Dr. Daniel Wildcat," *earthzine*, (last modified July 31, 2007, accessed November 8, 2014).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

the earth, and understanding one's own inescapable connectivity to the rest of the biosphere.[69]

Members of the Indigenous Action Alliance address the same themes of connectivity and accountability in their mission statement. They are a group built in connection with the Unist'ot'en Action camp, a resistance site formed and maintained by First Nations (Canadian indigenous) peoples to prevent tar sands pipelines and hydraulic fracturing projects from infringing on their lands.[70] The IAA mission statement particularly focuses on the violence that is perpetrated through current environmental policies, and envisions radical possibilities for change. Calling back to creation histories and current dynamics of land occupation by stating that they speak from "the unceded lands of our Beautiful Turtle Island," its members publicize their commitment to "an alliance against industrial exploitation" on sovereign Native territory, opposing the forces that have brought death and abuse to their communities "since first contact" with colonial occupiers.[71] A key element of their mission is communal respect, something they have not generally had extended to their own nations in the course of their work. They recognize the connectivity between all beings and the implications that has for environmental policymaking, emphasizing that they "have an inherent responsibility to ensure our actions are not negatively impacting our neighbouring nations and will not tolerate others who are inflicting harm on our Peoples."[72] Like Wildcat and Champagne, the members of the IAA connect to island imagery as a spiritual and cultural contact point when speaking on

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[69] Ibid.

[70] "Who We Are," *Unist'ot'en Camp*, http://unistotencamp.com/?page_id=2 (accessed November 9, 2014).

[71] "Indigenous Action Alliance," *Reclaim Turtle Island*, http://reclaimturtleisland.com/resistance/indigenous-action-alliance/ (last modified August 8, 2013, accessed November 8, 2014).

[72] Ibid.

environmental topics to a broad audience of both fellow indigenous people and colonial occupiers. For them, Turtle Island is a way to refer to the earth as a shared home where not all residents have been properly considering the health and safety of their housemates.

These indigenous engagements with islandness reinforce the need to expand our conceptions of the island as both a literal and figurative site of environmental image building. The Discovery Islands are another site that can be looked to to compile further narratives of island life and expand the research base on the topic of islandness. Exploring theories like Earth Island through a case study of actual environmentally engaged islanders can help further illuminate the utilities and limits of islandness as it exists in environmental thought. The more islanders have their voices highlighted in this field, the more possibilities exist for finding additional ways to make concepts like islandness and Earth Island applicable to daily, lived environmental practice on personal and broader scales. It is this insight that frames the following chapter, which details the results of the oral histories I conducted on the Discovery Islands in the summer of 2014, and which highlights the core themes that appeared across interviewees' experiences of island life.

Discovery Islands Research

Introducing the Islanders

My research on the Discovery Islands consisted of seventeen one-on-one interviews with current and former residents of Read, Quadra, Cortes, and Maurelle Islands. Those with whom I spoke comprised a subset of those who had moved to the islands as adults in the 1970s during the back-to-the-land movement and their adult children. This set of interviewees reflected a particular facet of islander experience. Many were drawn to the islands through a desire to connect with nature in a deeper way and/or distaste for the dynamics of more urban life, and display certain commonalities in their personal politics, spirituality, and perspectives on island life. In my interviews, I focused on topics of local environmental history and the nature of island community as experienced by Discovery Islanders. I asked interviewees to share their life stories as a way to detail how they came to live on the Discovery Islands and to give me a sense of what being an islander means to them. The research interests underlying my questions were both sociological and philosophical. Are there trends in the environmental outlook of people who live on extremely small islands? Does living on an island produce such an outlook, or do residents of these regions self-select, choosing to live on islands because of their already strong environmentalist feelings? How does the scale and bounded nature of island life affect community relationships? The conversations I had with islanders sometimes illuminated these questions for me in unexpected ways.

I recruited interviewees through my community connections in the area. Staying on Read Island with my mother and grandmother for almost two months brought a number of visitors to our door, mainly locals who remembered my relatives from when they lived

there full time and wanted to catch up. When introducing myself to these friends and neighbors, it was easy to lead the conversation towards my own reasons for being on the island. Some people were enthusiastic about talking about themselves. Other were more reticent, but gave me suggestions for people I could interview. Sometimes these links were with people not currently living on the island, precipitating a small number of email-based interviews. My other recruitment method was facilitated by my connection to the Discovery Islands Ecosystem Mapping Project, or DIEM,[73] a locally based nonprofit whose staff includes Eve Flager, a long-time family friend. I bonded with her over our shared interest in ArcGIS mapping software, and offered my assistance to DIEM as a part-time summer intern. In exchange for assisting her with digitizing several maps of watershed boundaries on the Discovery Islands, Eve took me with her when she went to DIEM-related events on Quadra and Cortes Islands and introduced me to people in those communities. Since most of my own local contacts through family were specific to Read Island, Eve's support and travel assistance significantly broadened my range of interviewees.

In total, I interviewed seventeen people, nine women and eight men, ranging in age from twenty-eight to eighty-one. Nine of them were sixty or older, and the four youngest interviewees were all adult children of older interviewees. Four, including three of the aforementioned adult children, had moved off of the Discovery Islands at the time I interviewed them, usually to other, larger British Columbian islands outside the archipelago. Interestingly, all of the three were engaged in some form of environmental work as all or part of their employment, ranging from running research stations to mapping ecosystem data to working with ocean conservation groups. Ten interviewees

[73] "About," DIEM Project | Discovery Islands Ecosystem Mapping, http://www.diemproject.org/ (accessed October 1, 2014).

reported that they were part-time workers, semi-retired, or retired. Five currently or formerly worked in fishing, shellfish farming, or logging-related professions. Eight were college graduates, and all but three reported having at least some college education.

Incomes were generally low among my interview base. Only two people reported an annual salary as high as $40,000, and many declined to state amounts but used phrases like "low income," "pensioner," or quite bluntly "at the poverty line."[74] Though income patterns were fairly steady, some statistics showed more distinct variations. There were interesting arrival time-based trends that varied from island to island. All my interviewees from Read and Maurelle Islands who reported their arrival date to me either arrived in the 1970s during the back-to-the-land movement or were children (by blood or marriage) of that generation, save for the one outlier who arrived as an infant with his parents in 1946. In contrast, all my interviewees from Quadra and Cortes Islands who reported their arrival date came to the islands between 1990 and 2000. In part, this reflects the nature of the community connections I have on each island. My Read Island connections are mainly through my grandmother, and tie me to the people who arrived on the island in the same decade as her and the children she saw them raise. On Quadra and Cortes, my contacts were primarily with people who were currently active in local environmental politics and community events, a condition not specific to 1970s arrivals. Additionally, since Quadra and Cortes are significantly larger than Read and Maurelle and host a wider range of

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[74] The poverty line, also known as the low-income cut-off (LICO), is currently set at $12,629 for a one-person household and $15,371 for a two-person household in rural regions of Canada. Calculated using Market Basket Measures, which are designed to account for the actual cost of living in a given region, the cut-offs are $14,925 for a one-person household and $21,106 for a two-person household in rural British Columbia specifically. I did not quiz my interviewees on their knowledge of Canadian government systems of poverty measurement and thus do not know where they believe the poverty line falls, but these statistics can be seen as a useful reference point to contextualize their self-descriptions. Source below.
Statistics Canada, "Low income Lines, 2010 to 2011," *Income Research Paper Series* (2012): 19-30.

housing options and public services, new arrivals are more frequent there than in the Outer Islands.

Since the topics the interviews covered were sometimes political and personal and included commentary on conflicts and issues within local communities, I will refer to all of the interviewees by pseudonyms. Although each interviewee was given the option of choosing a pseudonym, many left the choice up to me. This created an unexpected dilemma, as those who chose their own monikers suggested everything from common English names to terms for local flora and fauna. I initially tried assigning a mix of nature-themed and more traditionally formatted pseudonyms to those who left the choice up to me, my goal being to obscure which names subjects chose and which I selected after the fact. However, this created an odd dynamic in which some interviewees were described as people and others as wildlife, which was disorienting when reading their quotes. I was also concerned that in using common English names as pseudonyms, I might inadvertently give an interviewee the same name as someone else who currently lives in the region. In order to even the playing field and reduce the chance of creating pseudonyms that overlapped with the names of actual islanders, I changed all the pseudonyms to nature-themed ones. I was not actually speaking to rivers, bobcats, or cliff faces with an audio recorder in hand, and do not mean to make my interviewee's thoughts on the natural world sound more emphatic or persuasive because of it, but I thank the creative name choices of my interviewees for inspiring me to follow suit in resolving an unexpected nomenclature issue. It has certainly made quote transcription much more entertaining.

Many of my interviewees demonstrated commonalities in perspective on environmental topics, though there were also some interesting dynamics of difference. The

fact that many islanders felt a deep literal and/or spiritual connection to nature was unsurprising. Relationships to environmental politics, on the other hand, were broadly varied. Though almost every interviewee reported engaging in what could be considered environmental activism, many did not consider their actions political, and were uncomfortable with terms such as activist or environmentalist. Somewhat connected to this point, a deep sense of individuality was a common trait across the islands. Many interviewees expressed a deeply held sense of personal values that they saw as distinct from the views of larger cultural and political entities, and viewed island life as a way to get away from mainland culture and politics. However, they still maintained a deep sense of community within their island of residence, though being part of a tight-knit group where almost everyone has a strongly held set of personal and political values can create some social tension. If your home community hosts less than a hundred people, many of whom you will almost certainly need to interact with in order to access food, transit, and support in emergency situations, then the risks of conflict manifest differently than they would in a mainland region with more people and public services. My interviewees regularly navigate social spaces where they respect and depend deeply on others who they may not agree with politically, and want to function as a community while maintaining a sense of individuality and living their personal values in an authentic way.

Islanders and the Natural World

A deep sense of connection to nature was integral to many of my interviewees' identities and reasons for living on the islands. Some spoke of this as an ethic established in early childhood, others as a desire they developed as adults in response to the pressures of more densely crowded urban environments. In some cases the connection was spiritual, and in others deeply literal. As Cliff, one interviewee, expressed it, the two sensations can easily coexist, the physical presence of the natural world expanding one's spiritual and emotional sense of its value.

> If you live on this island you are intimate with nature whether you like it or not … Most residences here are surrounded in forest and most cannot see their neighbours' homes. We all basically live *inside* this temperate rainforest, not at its edge … Most of us would not have it any other way … The forest, animals, birds, and creatures become sacred to you, and of course the strength of this feeling varies from person to person but is generally strong in all here.[75]

This energy can be nurturing and violent, encompassing the difficulties and worries of vines climbing up the side of one's house or trees crashing down on top of water lines as well as the sense of comfort, relaxation, and safety that comes with a life in the British Columbian rainforest. Bobcat describes the nurturing and positive elements of nature in the context of human follies, asserting that "Mother Earth is our cradle and we are children who toddle around and make huge messes … We are all part of this life force and humans are the only ones who live so out of sorts with our surroundings." She is not alone in this theme. A number of islanders expressed a wish that broader society would acknowledge human beings as a part of nature rather than its masters. Iris says her parents "encouraged and supported … [her] fascination with nature" as something "to wonder at and treasure," which was easy to do in an environment as diverse and engaging as the British Columbian

[75] Cliff, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2014.

coast.[76] As a result, she “grew up feeling that humans were one more species among many, no more or less amazing than any other, and that all species were to be respected.”[77] Elk’s environmental philosophy follows a similar tack, asserting, “the whole paradigm of objectivity and being separate from nature has to be changed.”[78] Osprey also had a comparable childhood experience to Iris, with parents who “loved nature … wanted to protect nature and were supportive of preserving nature.”[79] For her, the “love of nature … [that] they instilled” led her and her husband to take the feeling “to the next level by moving into it,” settling on Read Island in their early twenties.[80] Fern says that she “literally felt love for the ocean that [she] swam in and the dirt that [she] ran on and the trees that [she] played in” as a child, and that her childhood on Read Island established “a real sense of [nature] being part of [her] family and [her] home.”[81] For islanders, nature can potentially be a friend, parent, and a homestead all in one without conceptual conflict.

How islanders conceptualize their love of nature in a political context varies tremendously. While almost all reported having engaged in some kind of political and/or community-based work related to environmental issues, many shied away from labels like activist or environmentalist, and some were deeply ambivalent about the terms, not rejecting them but not expressing a deep personal claim to them either. Ten of the seventeen were willing to take on the label without much, if any, hesitation. Iris is emphatic in her assertion that “rather than becoming an environmentalist, I think I was born one,”[82]

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[76] Iris, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2014.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Elk, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 19, 2014.
[79] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[82] Iris, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2014.

while Elk says he thinks that he "was an environmentalist before the term had been coined."[83] Robin's Blue describes herself as "definitely an environmentalist," a trait she hopes to pass on to her children as well, in principle if not in name.[84] Bear agreed the term applied to him, but specifically described it in opposition to other identifications, terming himself to be an environmentalist "way more so than an industrialist or a logger."[85] For him, it is a comfortable term, but one that has particular resonance when placed in contrast to other local political positions around the environment.

Other interviewees were conceptually open to the term, but did not automatically associate it with themselves. They expressed sentiments like "I think I would be considered an environmentalist"[86] and "I don't think of myself as an environmentalist but I probably am one, you know what I mean?"[87] Then there were those who actively rejected the terms. Orca said that "to pin [her] down" it might make sense to call her "an environmentalist and an activist," but that she hates "the 'ists' and … the 'isms'" and would rather just call herself a human, or a part of the environment.[88] Cliff says that he shies away "from the term 'activist' … [because] many activists activate people who do not really know much about what they are protesting against." Otter clarified that in her experience, the term "environmentalist has a lot of connotations" that don't necessarily reflect her well, and that she prefers to describe herself specifically as an environmental educator.[89] For these islanders, some terminology has associations with political practices that they do not

[83] Elk, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 19, 2014.
[84] Robin's Blue, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 3, 2014.
[85] Bear, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 24, 2014.
[86] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[87] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.
[88] Orca, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[89] Otter, interview by author, Cortes Island, BC, Canada, July 20, 2014.

respect, or consider to be inaccurate representations of their own personal philosophies on the environment. There are locally relevant reasons that environmentalist is a loaded word. Bear has found that the islands “have a lot of people who call other people tree huggers and environmental activists in a negative way,” especially when community conflicts arise around topics like industrial logging.[90] He believes that that this kind of pejorative use reflects people’s “lack of expertise” in thinking through all the information presented in debates on local environmental policy.[91] Sympathetic to those who face such confusion, he sees a retreat to name-calling as a response to the difficulty of pulling one clear, true narratives out of conflicting regional perspectives on what constitutes best practices in forestry.[92] On the Discovery Islands, the word environmentalist taps into a range of contentious local narratives about politics and nature.

[90] Bear, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 24, 2014.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

Individuality and Independence

One of the factors in this unease with group-oriented political labels is the trend towards individualism that runs through the islands. At least among my interviewees, most of whom consciously chose to move to the Discovery Islands as adults, one appealing element of island life is the chance it offers to disconnect from the social rituals of the mainland and live true to one's personal values in a more remote, natural location. Multiple factors reinforce this dynamic. The relatively small and spread out population of the islands makes it easier to live in voluntary isolation, buffered from the noise and opinions of neighbors by a substantial swath of forest. In addition, the scarcity of public services and stores means that islanders are pushed to learn more hands-on survival skills to make up for the lack of resources close by. For Bobcat, "being an islander means the freedom to live in the style I would like to live," though she still values the support her local community can offer.[93] Lupine describes her community on Read by saying "mostly there is no consensus, we are all rugged individualists."[94] Fern expands on this individual spirit even further.

> Islanders are very independent … Most of the things that you pay somebody to do in a city, you do for yourself on Read Island … Islanders tend to be very independent thinkers, to trust themselves and their own thoughts before accepting what other people tell them, and it's not that they don't have respect for authority but they don't necessarily feel that they are less equal than somebody with more money or in a position of authority or power … typically they're fairly liberal-minded, easygoing, everybody works hard but I think islanders tend to want to work for themselves rather than work for another job from nine to five, they'd rather spend their whole day keeping their homestead running or maybe going tree planting for a while and then coming home.[95]

Among many islanders, the opportunity to have such a degree of personal control over the structure of one's life, from cultural values to work scheduling, ranks high in importance.

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[93] Bobcat, e-mail message to author, July 28, 2014.

[94] Lupine, Facebook message to author, September 26, 2014.

[95] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.

Many of them feel that they cannot achieve the level of control they desire in cities or towns. Cliff felt a desire to "escape the big city life" and move somewhere "with less stress, a less-congested living design" where he had more room to breathe, both literally and metaphorically.[96] Similarly, Robin's Blue says she values the island as a way to "be free of the busyness of town," which she finds "hectic and distracting" from her core interests.[97] For Hawk, who abhors crowds and populous areas, moving to an island provided a new sense of peace. He finds that he is "not comfortable in a city" under any circumstances other than briefly passing through one by car and that his "hackles rise" as soon as he enters one, leaving him tense until he is able to depart.[98] Elk notes how his architectural training helped illuminate his desire to live in the wilderness, a path that eventually led him to the Discovery Islands. "I became aware of the fact that I was being … programmed. There was a box, and I was learning how to fit in the box and move little boxes around."[99] Being able to "go away at weekends into wild places and experience what it's like to not be in the box" made him happier, but increasingly dissatisfied with his weekday life.[100] For his college thesis, he wrote "on villages, advocating that the world's population … should abandon cities altogether."[101] Orca cites similar motivations for her move to Quadra Island, saying that she finds cities mentally stifling. She thinks "there is pressure from the government to get us all living in cities because we're much more malleable there," subject to the structures and schedules of city life.[102] She believes that "psychologically your mind should,

[96] Cliff, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2014.
[97] Robin's Blue, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 3, 2014.
[98] Hawk, interview by author, Vancouver Island, BC, Canada, July 26, 2014.
[99] Elk, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 19, 2014.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Orca, interview by author, July 12, 2014.

and often does, open up on an island,"[103] much like Elk's experiences of escape from societal "boxes" through wilderness exploration. There are also useful financial dynamics to living on a rural island with minimal services. Hawk explains how the low property taxes on the islands[104] allowed him to own a larger piece of land than he could ever purchase in a city or mainland town, with space to grow food and maintain a large workshop space for his personal creative projects.[105] Being able to pursue their professional interests on a personally designed schedule (and often in a personally designed space) while also developing the hands-on building, farming, and repair skills necessary for island independence has left many islanders feeling more content, and less boxed in.

The chance to be detached from the grid and insulated from outsiders is also a frequently cited motivating factor for island life. Cliff finds that living on Quadra "is like living in a castle and the water around us is the moat, cutting off the outside world, keeping us safe and insulated from many of the world's evils."[106] Orca puts it bluntly: "being away from people" in a safe, quiet place is one of her primary motivators for island life, echoing the moat-like themes of Cliff's description.[107] Osprey is also a fan of the safety factor of isolation, noting that being on an island with no ferry service means she and her neighbors "basically have our own world" where "it's safe, it's private, it's quiet, it's peaceful," free of highway noise pollution and with almost zero chance of running into a stranger without

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Though property taxes and land prices have increased since Hawk and others moved to the Discovery Islands, limiting options for new generations of arrivals, the low price of land in the 1970s was a part of the incentive for many back-to-the-landers.

[105] Hawk, interview by author, Vancouver Island, BC, Canada, July 26, 2014.

[106] Cliff, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2014.

[107] Orca, interview by author, July 12, 2014.

warning in one's daily life.[108] Pine describes the experience more as a balancing act, in which island life allows him to live "detached comfortably from the grid, while maintaining a healthy connection with regular society."[109] Fern similarly has lived in larger communities but appreciates how commercial influences like fashion, advertising, and television are close to nonexistent on Read Island.[110] Not having to be steeped in them constantly makes some off-island social norms and structures more palatable.

Being distanced from the transit services, medical clinics, and social conventions of the mainland provides an alluring degree of freedom, but also greatly expands the need for personal responsibility. Osprey notes that while Read Island is "a tight community … we're also all doing our own thing," which means she and others "really have to cater [their] lifestyle so that [they] are self-reliant," monitoring their physical health with care, learning first aid, and growing fresh food to supplement supplies from the grocery store on the neighboring island of Quadra.[111] Lupine expands this list, describing how to her, "being an islander means understanding tides and current, being able to improvise with all kinds of problems … when you look around at what you have you know that it was all your own doing – the messes and the successes."[112] Iris says that people on the islands are "resourceful, independent and unique individuals" who "by nature are often quite well connected to where their food comes from and are more likely to grow or gather it locally rather than hauling huge amounts from other places" in addition to being better versed in

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[108] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.
[109] Pine, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.
[110] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[111] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.
[112] Lupine, Facebook message to author, September 26, 2014.

other practical skills, like boating or first aid.[113] She is shocked and saddened that these life skills are not much more widespread on the mainland.[114]

River also points out that the small scale of island community means it's especially foolish to depend on other people to initiate activities or actions on topics you care about. "If you want to see a project happen, you have to get going on it yourself or inspire others to help out."[115] Though personal responsibility is greater on the islands in this way, the individual impact a person can have on community events is proportionally larger, so kick starting a project on one's own is often not unreasonable. Some of these projects manifest themselves politically, as islanders develop responses to environmental change in their home communities.

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[113] Iris, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2014.
[114] Ibid.
[115] River, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.

Fish and Forest Concerns

Identifying community environmental concerns was another element of my exploration of Discovery Island life. I asked islanders to identify what they considered to be the most pressing environmental issues on their island, both currently and across time. Logging was the overwhelming standout theme within their answers, especially as they concerned the present moment. Thirteen of my seventeen interviewees cited some aspect of logging or its effects as the environmental issue of greatest concern on the Discovery Islands. They described the issue in terms of its effects on forest ecosystems, aesthetic viewscapes, and the habitat health of salmon streams, presenting a broad-ranging analysis of logging's effects on their lives. Many noted the ways in which the distinct visibility of extensive deforestation makes it an easy point of focus when thinking about environmental concerns. An interest in more sustainable logging practices and community input was widespread. Interviewees were eager to note that they were not unilaterally opposed to the cutting of trees, especially as many were personally or communally tied to the logging industry through their jobs or the jobs of their friends and family. However, they wanted a more thoughtfully managed and ecologically aware approach to the practice that allowed for more options than the wholesale clear cutting of all trees on a plot. This perspective on logging and related issues has developed out of a long and dynamic community history of fishing and forestry.

The dynamics of land use on the islands have changed over time. Logging and fishing, two of the practices most often opened up to critique on environmental fronts, are visible and relevant in part because they represent such a substantial part of local economic history. Before the back-to-the-land movement was populating the Discovery

Islands, earlier waves of settlers moved to the area to log its substantial old growth forests and harvest its plentiful salmon and shellfish populations. Though early colonial logging in Canada occurred primarily in the eastern provinces such as New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec, producing wood products that were exported to European markets, "the centre of Canadian wood production gradually shifted westward" over time.[116] British Columbian logging established itself firmly in the 1850s to serve "markets scattered around the Pacific and as distant as South Africa."[117] Shipping options for BC timber further expanded in scope with "the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s," and by the late 1920s the province was the source of "half of Canada's annual cut of timber."[118] Though facing the extensive loss of old growth forests from repeated cycles of logging and occasionally mired by recession, forestry remains a strong element of British Columbian life. It is one of the nation's "most forest-dependent regions," with an economy heavily tied to the forestry sector.[119] "Currently 1 in 5 jobs in BC is related to forestry," and the industry is one of the fastest growing in the province, "with an average annual growth rate of 1.7%."[120] Overall, forestry represents 1.25% of national[121] and 3% of provincial GDP.[122] Like forestry, the construction of fisheries and the practice of commercial fishing developed

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[116] Graeme Wynne and Erin James-Abra, "Timber Trade History," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/timber-trade-history/ (last modified March 11, 2014, accessed November 21, 2014).
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] "Industry," *Natural Resources Canada*, http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/forests/industry/133105 (last modified September 9, 2014, accessed December 6, 2014).
[120] "Forestry in BC," *Vancouver Island University*, https://www2.viu.ca/forestry/Careers/Forestry-in-BC.asp (accessed November 21, 2014).
[121] "Canada's forest industry by the numbers," *Natural Resources Canada*, http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/forests/industry/13311 (last modified November 19, 2014, accessed December 6, 2014).
[122] "The Economic Contribution of BC Forest Industry," *Council of Forest Industries*, http://www.cofi.org/bc-forest-industry/economics-statistics/ (accessed November 21, 2014).

earlier on Canada's Atlantic coast, but spread west over time, particularly coming to prominence in the early 20th century.[123]

Fern echoes these themes in her own description of island history.

> I think forestry and fishery have always been the biggest issues here because they were such huge resources to this area … what people did when they first colonized here was log and fish, and that is what the entire economy was based on at one point in time.[124]

Extensive resource use has led to economic shifts for local people, with the old methods of job production gradually fading out and leaving an uncertain future ahead. Chicory says that when he arrived on Read Island in the 1970s, "you could still make a living from the woods" through logging, fishing, and shellfish farming, with families on the surrounding islands even teaching their children how to pick wild berries and harvest clams and oysters for sale, but that way of life has become less viable.[125] Though the introduction of Internet access to a few locations on the island over the past couple of years has slightly expanded the potential for long-distance employment,[126] the question of future economic opportunities for a former logging and fishing community is still a thorny one. The larger islands have faintly more options. Bobcat reports that on Quadra, some local businesspeople have taken up nature tourism projects like boat tours, kayak rentals, fishing guides,[127] and similar pursuits as strategies for "trying to use nature as a way to live

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[123] Ian M Drummond and Gord McIntosh, "Economic History," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/economic-history/ (last modified April 4, 2014, accessed November 21, 2014).
[124] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[125] Chicory, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, June 23, 2014.
[126] Ibid.
[127] For more insight on the range of career options based around marine nature tourism in the Discovery Islands, see article below.
Carrie Saxifrage, "Why does logging trump tourism in the Discovery Islands and Desolation Sound?," *Vancouver Observer,* http://www.vancouverobserver.com/blogs/earthmatters/why-does-logging-trump-

instead of damaging [it] as a way to live."[128] Taken as a whole, the Discovery Islands are "the second most popular marine tourism destination in the province," which indicates a potentially positive future for the region if the logging and fishing industries are willing to hold preservation of biodiversity and beauty as core priorities.[129] Regardless of which employment opportunities were on the horizon for their particular island, my interviewees were in broad agreement that the dynamics of logging will have to be altered in some way to accommodate environmental change.

The stark visibility of clear cut land and the way it changes the viewscapes that make much Discovery Island land appealing to visitors and residents makes logging an easy focal point for thinking about environmental issues in the region. Such topics have been a growing concern since 2003, when government revisions to the Forest Range & Practices Act "relaxed controls over coastal logging, allowing it to take place in key wilderness tourism zones" that had previously been afforded more protection.[130] Otter laments the fact that, as forest codes and protections have been eroded in the province, regulatory power has "all been handed over to a model of professional reliance, and so we therefore rely on the professionals in the industry to determine how they're going to log in our forests," meaning that industrial forestry decisions often focus on immediate profit rather than long-term viability.[131] This has disturbing implications for local environmental health, as well as for businesses that bank on the region's forested beauty. There is a lack of

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tourism-discovery-islands-and-desolation-sound (last modified August 19, 2013, accessed November 23, 2014).

[128] Bobcat, e-mail message to author, July 28, 2014.

[129] Mark Hume, "Tourism in the Discovery Islands feels the force of logging," *The Globe and Mail*, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/tourism-in-the-discovery-islands-feels-the-force-of-logging/article9703141/ (last modified March 14, 2013, accessed November 21, 2014).

[130] Ibid.

[131] Otter, interview by author, Cortes Island, BC, Canada, July 20, 2014.

transparency about logging companies' plans for cuts, with many local operators of tourism services only "find[ing] out about forest development plans when [they] start to see trees being felled," leaving them with "no meaningful way to influence cut blocks."[132] The startling and unexpected visibility of such logging practices has generated significant community energy and push back, with the worried coalition of tourism-based business owners representing just one facet of a larger response. Interviewee Cliff feels that the sight of logging in progress or logged land after the act can motivate local people to ask more questions about environmental impacts and concerns.

> If somebody starts cutting down a big tree which the public is aware of, people will ask why; people become uneasy when suddenly a swath of forest beside the road is felled … You seek the cause and if possible take action to prevent any repetition.[133]

Robin's Blue elaborates on the multisensory impacts of the event, highlighting "the contrast of having a forest and it being cool and then it being a clear cut … a couple weeks later, and how hot it is," a temperature shift that reveals "how you just change landscapes, you change whole ecosystems in areas just by … how the land is managed."[134] For her and other islanders, the sense of human-produced ecosystem change is often intense and can serve as a motivator towards community action.

A specific focal point for community action on Read Island has been the maintenance and protection of the island's Coho salmon stream, an unnamed but notable local natural feature. Chicory described how the forest around the stream has been "logged to within 30-40 feet … and that [remaining] strip we had to buy because they were going to

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[132] Mike Moore, "120 Tourism Businesses Threatened by Outdated Forestry Practices," *Wildstands | Standing up for the wilderness on Cortes Island,* https://wildstands.wordpress.com/2013/03/12/discovery-islands-marine-tourism-group/ (last modified March 12, 2013, accessed November 21, 2014).

[133] Cliff, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2014.

[134] Robin's Blue, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 3, 2014.

log it right to the streambed."[135] Lupine also remembers the issue of "logging across the streams" being a major concern when she moved to the island.[136] With wild Coho populations dropping dangerously due to the species' dependency on year-round fresh stream water for spawning and fry development, losing Read's stream would be a harsh hit against an already threatened population. As it is, the salmon fry "have to dig into the mud to survive the drought" season when the stream dries up into a few scattered ponds.[137] In fact, if their numbers grow too high, the fry will overtax the oxygen supply in the ponds and die, a risk that leaves the local Coho stuck in a kind of population limbo. Without the addition of an outside water source, growing the Coho's numbers locally is not possible. Still, preserving the streambed through communal land purchase was a strong community step that helped keep more options open for the future. Though the community association successfully raised funds to purchase and preserve one strip of unlogged streambed, the ecosystem effects of logging remain prevalent.

Critiques of the extent of logging were common across the interviews. River cited deforestation as "the most pressing issue" for her community on Read Island, but specified "the scope of it" as the main concern.[138] As a professional tree planter[139] who helps restore logged land, she says, she "can't really be opposed to logging but [is] opposed to giant clear

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[135] Chicory, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, June 23, 2014.

[136] Lupine, Facebook message to author, September 26, 2014.

[137] Chicory, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, June 23, 2014.

[138] River, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.

[139] The reforestation of logged land is a major project in British Columbia. Originally funded and organized largely by the government, in 1987 new provincial law required logging companies to take responsibility for reforesting areas they logged. Though laws have relaxed somewhat since then, a sizable portion of tree planting projects are still funded by private companies, and government reforestation responsibilities are limited in scope. For more information, see source below.
Anthony Britneff, "British Columbia's Unprecedented Reforestation Challenge," Conference Paper, 2011 Annual Conference of the Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association, Delta Grand Okanagan Resort and Conference Centre, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada (February 2-4, 2011).

cuts," which are "disrupting wildlife corridors and watersheds" on the island to a particularly disturbing degree due to Read's small size.[140] Osprey displayed a similar pragmatism, positing that "you cannot stop the logging, it's going to happen, but at least if we can protect those sensitive areas," things will be better.[141] She is in favor of limited logging and resists expansion and new methods that might further disrupt the local ecosystem. Since "there has never been any chemical spraying on the island … it's got to stay that way" to preserve the existing flora and fauna.[142] River is also opposed to this "hack and squirt"[143] method of weed management in forest plantations, and she and Pine both note how blocking "the forestry industry from spraying chemicals" through protests was a past victory for locally driven forest management.[144]

There are a multitude of players in the logging industry on the Discovery Islands. The government has a notable degree of authority over land use decisions, as 94% of the province of British Columbia is Provincial Crown land, and thus subject to management by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, who can sell the surface rights to Crown land "to individuals, businesses, and local government."[145] These sale rights mean that, while community members can theoretically access Crown land to log or alter by other approved means, larger-scale logging companies still possess a financial advantage over locals in terms of how much land they can purchase and control. On the Discovery Islands in particular, the main two private industry presences are Island Timberlands and

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[140] River, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.
[141] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.
[142] Ibid.
[143] River, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.
[144] Pine, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.
[145] Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, "Crown Land Factsheet," *The Province of British Columbia*, http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/land_tenures/documents/publications/crownland_factsheet.pdf (accessed November 23, 2014).

TimberWest,[146] with Raven Forest Products also an influence at times[147] and the government maintaining additional direct involvement through its provincial logging operation, BC Timber Sales.[148] The Discovery Islands are no exception to the provincial trend of land ownership, consisting largely of Crown Land, and therefore represent a viable site for logging operations run by a range of entities.

While these major organizations may hire local loggers through their work, some Discovery Islanders would prefer more locally owned and operated logging enterprises. They want to log at a "community scale" that reflects local needs and would funnel profits back into the local economy rather than exporting benefits to the larger government or corporate entities.[149] Bear believes that Read Island in particular could have a more sustainable logging future if the local community managed the enterprise. He explains that "the largest woodlot in British Columbia is here on Read Island," and believes that under community management it could produce "three or four full-time jobs, year in, year out, harvesting what becomes mature in the woodlot and maintain and promoting future use … through good forestry practices."[150] He wants to see local forestry policies center on the removal of diseased wood, using more commercially viable wood slowly with an eye towards long-term sustainability and local community benefit.[151] His thoughts are part of a

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[146] "Islanders Stand Up for Our Forests," Discovery Islander, http://www.discoveryislands.ca/news/back-issues/pdfs/DI-547.pdf (last modified March 22, 2014, accessed November 23, 2014).

[147] Judy Johnson, "Raven Update – Lot 123," *Discovery Islander*, http://www.discoveryislands.ca/news/back-issues/pdfs/DI-231.pdf (last modified January 19, 2001, accessed November 23, 2014).

[148] Carrie Saxifrage, "Why does logging trump tourism in the Discovery Islands and Desolation Sound?," *Vancouver Observer,* http://www.vancouverobserver.com/blogs/earthmatters/why-does-logging-trump-tourism-discovery-islands-and-desolation-sound (last modified August 19, 2013, accessed November 23, 2014).

[149] Daniel J. Pierce, "Heartwood: Forest Guardians of Cortes Island • Official Documentary Trailer," *Ramshackle Pictures*, http://vimeo.com/57875122 (accessed November 23, 2014).

[150] Bear, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 24, 2014.

[151] Ibid.

larger local trend that favors logging practices that keep profits on the islands and minimize aesthetic and ecological impacts.

One of the complicating factors in criticisms of logging is the fact that loggers are part of the local population, and the scale of the community on the Outer Islands in particular means that at least one will inevitably have some social connection to anyone involved in logging-related politics. Elk explains that "local campaigns against logging" are generally not "against logging per se because we have a lot of friends and neighbors who are loggers, but … [for] selective logging."[152] He sees loggers as being played by a larger social and economic system "which is expedient for the people who are in control," and says that portraying those who log as the "bad guys" misses the bigger picture of who makes the large scale management decisions that drive the industry.[153] Chicory concurs, explaining how he "really can't blame the loggers so much, [because] it's the forestry department, the provincial government that wants every buck that it can make in stumpage or royalty."[154] Maple, one of the local loggers in question, says that he finds the community tends to have a more negative reaction to logging practices when larger corporate forces initiate them. In his experience, "when the small logging happened nobody said very much. When a big company … bought a big portion of the island and it came time to log, when they started logging all these environmental excuses came against it."[155] While his logging operations are small-scale compared to some enacted by corporate entities, Maple sees himself as part of a network of loggers that includes much bigger operations, and does not believe local responses to logging should vary so strongly based on scale and the agents

[152] Elk, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 19, 2014.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Chicory, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, June 23, 2014.
[155] Maple, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 6, 2014.

involved. Though loggers and other residents are certainly not always in agreement about how to best manage local forests, some islanders see distinct positives in the situation. Iris argues that:

> It's actually great when the loggers live within the community they log in, because they tend to be much more likely to listen to their neighbour's concerns about a cut block being too near a stream, or ruining a traditional hiking trail, and help to intervene and make compromises. It seems that living where you work, and having a connection to the local community, is key to respecting the ecosystem you are working in.[156]

The dialogue may sometimes be contentious and make people nervous about straining community relationships, but there is still more potential for dialogue on topics of logging when loggers are an integral part of local social spaces than when they come from outside a community.

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[156] Iris, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2014.

Islanders in Community

Collective environmental activist efforts by community members, such as those related to logging, reflect some of the positive elements and some of the tensions of island life. Community members often depend on each other for support to offset the lack of public services in their rural region, but may also find it hard to work through conflicts when contentious topics and people must all occupy a very small physical space. It is difficult to avoid people you have differences of opinion with on an island, and you may need to hold in some of your thoughts in order to get their help accessing transit, fresh food, or backup in emergency situations.

The isolation of islands can help stimulate community members' awareness of their deep interdependence on each other. Many interviewees noted that even when they have differences of opinion with their neighbors, they see it as their duty to support those around them and make sure they are taken care of in times of need. Iris says that though islanders "may not get along with … all [their neighbours] super well, almost any islander will go out of their way to help another who is in trouble – because they know all they have is each other and it could be them needing help tomorrow."[157] Cliff concurs, explaining that islanders "help each other far more readily than … people in cities," especially with concerns that are enhanced on islands, like stopping to "help someone who is stranded in an isolated spot."[158] Chicory says that the reliance on neighbors that islands cultivate has led him into friendships that might not have developed in other places, putting him in close quarters with a wider range of people than he tended to meet on the mainland. He finds that having a "feeling of solidarity with your community" in all its varied facets means that

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Cliff, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2014.

"you've got to accept [your neighbors] for … who they are, and go with the flow and respect that, and they've got to do the same."[159] Knowing that the people around you have your back and will be there if you are in trouble helps make it easier to accept differences in politics or social values, as those variations rest on top of a foundation of mutual trust.

Trust and support between islanders cannot totally erase the tension of difference or disagreement, especially when it concerns environmental issues with a broad local impact. On Read Island, the Surge Narrows Community Association[160] works to be as apolitical as possible because past attempts to engage with "contentious issues" like logging left some members of the community feeling alienated and attacked.[161] Cliff finds that on Quadra Island, strong environmental feelings mean that people can "lose friends by taking a different stance to theirs," and people who engage in critiqued practices like hunting or herbicide and insecticide use tend to not mention it in order to avoid inciting conflict.[162] Robin's Blue says she also avoids certain topics to not alienate friends and neighbors, and tries "to think about where we could meet on [an issue] … [or] just tr[ies] to agree to disagree and pleasantly go on to something else" if the subject is unavoidable.[163] She thinks that focusing on commonalities rather than differences can be a good tool for approaching

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[159] Chicory, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, June 23, 2014.

[160] The SNCA is a group of Read Island community members that builds and "maintains community buildings, supports and facilitates many community project initiatives and publishes a community newsletter" for the residents of Read Island and other interested parties. They also work in partnership with the DIEM Project to monitor the group's progress and provide financial and logistical support to their sensitive ecosystem mapping initiatives. Sources below.
Surge Narrows Community Association, "About Surge Narrows Community Association," *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/SurgeNarrowsCommunityAssociation/info?tab=page_info (accessed December 7, 2014).
"The Team," *DIEM Project*, http://www.diemproject.org/about/the-team/ (accessed December 7, 2014).

[161] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.

[162] Cliff, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2014.

[163] Robin's Blue, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 3, 2014.

difficult topics. Fern summarizes this kind of communal fear, and the delicacy of navigating it:

> There's so few people [on the island] that you're friends with everybody until there is an issue … there are rifts between people that still exist today based on heated conversations and arguments … on forest management … you love everybody in the community and you still might not totally agree with them at all and you still can't completely just back down and not voice your opinion if you feel that … something's not being addressed and it's hurting your home and its resources. So you have to find a way to speak up and be heard and bring forward these issues that people don't want to look at because they're really, really scary and hard to deal with, in a way that doesn't alienate or judge another person.[164]

Awareness of what rifts and grudges in island communities can look like, however rare, can have a big impact on how, and in what context, islanders voice their opinions. Balancing necessary expressions of environmental needs with a desire to prevent judgment and alienation is a difficult process, but one that many islanders still work to enact. As Fern asserts, damage to the island ecosystem is important enough to necessitate risky conversations.

River worries that the desire to avoid conflict coupled with the small population means that her island community can end up "lacking a political voice" and "enough people to work on issues and projects," as not everyone is comfortable being involved in political work.[165] She also finds that older islanders who "used to be hippies who were into community building and environmental activism" have experienced activist burnout and "don't have energy for that anymore," while the rising price of local land and fading job market limits the potential for younger, more energized people to join the community.[166] Worries about alienation, conflict, and damaged friendships can prevent islanders from

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[164] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[165] River, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.
[166] Ibid.

wanting to engage or expand their engagement in political, and particularly environmental, issues.

Still, the Discovery Islands have been a site for successful community environmental work, and there may be opportunities for that work to continue developing along locally relevant lines. Pine sees hopeful positives in the scale of the islands. "Because the island community is small enough to function like a village … [it] can surpass [a lot] of confusion that usually blocks or hinders efforts in larger communities."[167] Gull concurs. While he has seen political tensions arise on the islands because it is hard for people who disagree to avoid each other, he finds advantages in the bounded space as well. He explains, "in a small community, I can probably find a way to connect with almost anybody I want to. So from that point, it's better" as a site of political work around contentious topics.[168] Lupine has found that being in close quarters with a varied range of opinionated and independent people has expanded her sense of who might become a key player in environmental work.

> The people whom I thought would be empathetic to certain environmental causes have not always agreed with the actions taken to solve the problem, and conversely I have been surprised by the ones I thought were the problem helping out with the solutions. Mostly what I have learned is never to assume what others are capable of, or where the solution will come from.[169]

For her, the same dynamics that can create political conflict on the islands also speak to the potential for unexpected solutions to environmental issues. Living in a small, tight community means that everyone is a stakeholder in local environmental change, and this sometimes leads surprising people to step up to the plate.

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[167] Pine, e-mail message to author, September 28, 2014.
[168] Gull, interview by author, Cortes Island, BC, Canada, July 20, 2014.
[169] Lupine, Facebook message to author, September 26, 2014.

It is crucial to understand that Discovery Islanders' desire to maintain a sense of community in the face of conflicting perspectives does not mean they are unwilling to critique or push back against environmental practices that they see as threats to local and/or global health and safety. All but one of my interviewees reported personal involvement with local community responses to environmental issues, especially around logging, and even those who were not personally involved were aware of community responses initiated by others.

There are differences in how Discovery Islanders undertake responses to environmental concerns depending on their scale. Several[170] reported[171] funding non-local environmental groups through regular or sporadic donations, considering large-scale issues worthy of support but mainly offering their money rather than their time or other forms of input. For local issues like new proposed logging sites, responses were more direct and action-based, frequently utilizing the small scale of island community to add clout to political pressure. As Iris noted, when loggers live within the community where they log, it is harder for them to ignore or distance themselves from community concerns, which can potentially give locals an advantage in voicing their opinions on forestry.[172] The size and boundedness of the islands also means that news travels quickly throughout the community, allowing for swift organization around new issues, even if opinions on the topic are not homogenous.

Locals also have an advantage over larger corporate logging entities through their particular attentiveness to change. It is possible for an islander to be familiar with the vast

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[170] Osprey, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 18, 2014.
[171] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[172] Iris, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2014.

majority of their island home, making them quick to point out visual shifts in local land features, such as evidence of logging. One element of the DIEM Project's work on the islands is compiling local environmental knowledge in GIS map form, highlighting pieces of information missed by larger-scale government and industry-compiled mapping projects. This compilation helps create counter narratives to those produced by industry. Fern, who currently works for DIEM, hopes their resource gathering helps create a situation where local "people can make their own decisions around resource management and resource development plans."[173] Bear presents an example of the kind of misleading information logging companies may issue about their approaches to forestry, and how local knowledge is important in countering and critically examining such claims.

> Many riparian areas, wildlife sanctuaries, little spots that were left on the properties look good on paper, but what they really are is little rock knobs and areas that are marshy or hard to get to or rocky bluffs. And when you look on a map you see these … called wildlife set-asides or wildlife habitat, and what it really basically is – wood that's not worth cutting, so they draw a line around it, call it habitat, and don't log there. They get credit for it, rather than logging some areas that probably should be logged and replanted. But there's no profit in logging something that's too diseased, so they set it aside as wildlife habitat.[174]

The styles of information gathering available to islanders (knowledge accumulated over many years of residence, familiarity with island ecosystems, and access to remote, hard-to-access spaces) can augment and contest assessments of the potential impacts of logging as presented by logging companies and government overviews of environmental conditions. Local awareness of structures like the location of wildlife habitats, the practical boundaries of island watersheds, and the health and quality of scarce old-growth forest can provide details that are either missing or obscured in the context of broader land surveys.

[173] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.
[174] Bear, interview by author, Read Island, BC, Canada, July 24, 2014.

Islands in Context

The stories and experiences of the Discovery Island residents I interviewed demonstrate that they articulate their social and environmental outlook of the world as distinct from many principles held to be true in larger, mainland communities. Pushed to think about their personal environmental impacts and manage difference and conflict in a tight, interdependent community of rugged individualists, these islanders have built values systems that make their personal and communal lives more navigable. Many of these traits are generated or enhanced by the bounded, isolated nature of small islands. This concept of "islandness" and the values it can generate has been a point of interest for environmental theorists both on and off islands, producing narratives like Earth Island that hold promise but are limited in their current applicability.

Addressing the practical dimensions of what alternate approaches to Earth Island image making can look like and accomplish is an extensive project, and one that I hope to kick-start rather than conclude in this paper. The following chapter will draw some further connections between the work of other researchers and theorists and my analysis of island community life and values, with an eye toward the social and political applications of these common themes. The environmental awareness that living in physically bounded spaces like islands can generate is a major topic of interest that I hope can help inform increased resource awareness and environmental stewardship on local and global levels. How much islanders rely on other community members for support is also a theme worth addressing, especially in terms of the ways this affects conflict management and political expression. Living in community and working to handle disagreement productively is a difficult but powerful process, and one that sheds light on the many implications that Earth Island can

encompass. To think of oneself as part of a global island community means acknowledging and respecting a vast range of different values and life experiences, and learning how to navigate many potential conflicts of interest and opinion. Digging into current and classic Island Studies literature and contextualizing it through the voices of modern islanders can help set the groundwork for further useful explorations of the environmental and political potential of islandness.

Conclusion

Earth Island is an image that draws on fear and even a certain element of shame to promote more thoughtful environmental stewardship – the people of this island did not acknowledge their limits and it led them to destruction, the scholarly narrative claims. If you are not wiser, you will suffer the same fate for your foolishness. While studying others' past mistakes can be a powerful learning tool, I believe that focusing on more positive and generative themes in island life can help create new kinds of analogies that provide a broader range of approaches to environmental issues.

I believe that community-focused approaches to island environmental imagery can address the same concerns as concepts like lifeboat ethics or Earth Island without reinforcing a sense of separation between supposedly deserving and undeserving groups of people. One approach to this is to repurpose existing terms, but orient them in a new way. For example, Philip Conkling sees potential in reorienting Garrett Hardin's terminology in a more positive direction, viewing the "communal nature of islandness as a kind of 'lifeboat ethics'" that are more focused on mutual support and respect between people.[175] In this reconfiguration, lifeboat ethics refers to "the sense [that] islanders' individual fates [are] intimately and inextricably tied up with those with whom they are cast and with whom they have (almost) no choice but to accept, since all succeed or fail together."[176] Iris emphasizes that on an island, people need "to be quite conscious of how important their neighbours are … because they know all they have is each other" if they need any kind of support.[177] Even if you don't get along with someone, you will come to their aid if they are

[175] Philip Conkling, "On Islanders and Islandness," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007), 199.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Iris, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2014.

in trouble, because in the end you are core resources for each other's survival. On these islands where loggers and ecologists mingle, differences of environmental opinion may sometimes be hard to resolve, but everyone is still committed in making the region a liveable place for all, ecologically and socially. Similarly, on a reoriented Earth Island, there is no way to simply push people out of this lifeboat for their assumed environmental failings – it is planet-sized, and we need to find a way to safely balance and steer it as a global community even in the face of conflict.

Looking to entirely different theorists, disciplines, and sites of knowledge for inspiration is another way to help broaden the potential usefulness of the concept of islandness. Indigenous approaches to the creation story of Turtle Island reflect some overlapping priorities to those that Conkling and others value when discussing islands, focusing on interrelationships between people as well as between human beings and other parts of their ecosystem. The perspective of groups like the Indigenous Action Alliance demand an acknowledgement of all people's abilities to support each other's needs as a community, or to do each other harm by denying that relationship.[178] This logic is supported by the residents of a range of small, rural islands today, who recognize "…the importance of recognizing 'wild' environments as social landscapes imbued with cultural and spiritual meaning, especially" when such landscapes are essential for the continued survival of local communities.[179] When "the human, social aspects of the wild" are fully acknowledged, many communities find reasons to begin doubting "the rationale for

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[178] "Indigenous Action Alliance," *Reclaim Turtle Island*, http://reclaimturtleisland.com/resistance/indigenous-action-alliance/ (last modified August 8, 2013, accessed November 8, 2014).

[179] Irené Novaczek, "Culturally Based Ethics and Resource Conservation: Learning from Small Islands," Conference Paper, 3rd International Small Island Cultures Conference from the Institute of Island Studies, Prince Edward Island, Canada (June 29-July 2, 2007).

industrial forms of economic development through which 'the wild' is tamed and transmuted into money, without regard for the consequences" of such actions to the natural world and the particular "human communities nested within it."[180] There is a great deal of political energy to be found in the process of generating respect for the natural world as a home for many beings, of which humans are a diverse and often culturally conflicted subgroup. Fern asserts that "everything that comes from being raised in a natural environment – that connection with the earth and that type of coordination," is essential to her sense of what it means to be an islander, and helped create her motivation to pursue an environmentally oriented and politically engaged career.[181] Her sense of connectivity to local and global ecosystems is not unusual upon the islands, and reflects the power of such connectivity to generate political drive.

Though these perspectives are communal and interrelated in focus, they do not presuppose that existing in community is an easy undertaking. Inherent in these approaches to island imagery is an understanding that the current state of the earth involves a great deal of violence and conflict. Relating to other people as members of a global island community is complicated by longstanding social and political power imbalances and the dynamics of fear, mistrust, and disrespect that result from them. Building images of communal islandness that can be applied to address issues of systemic violence will be a long and complex process, involving input from a range of sources. The voices of Discovery Islanders will not complete this project by any means, but can contribute to the wider discourse on islandness and help diversify the range of source points on the topic with a view towards further research. Particularly striking are the ways

[180] Ibid.

[181] Fern, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 12, 2014.

that Discovery Islanders report understanding their place in island ecosystems and managing conflict within their communities.

The earthy roughness and lack of dependable institutionally based social services on the Discovery Islands and other islands of a similar scale and structure creates a radically different community dynamic than that present in more populous areas. Islanders know they may be called upon to quite literally save the lives of their neighbors at any time, even those whose social or political perspectives they dislike. As a result, they are "simultaneously and conversely both highly communal and highly tolerant of obstinate individuality," willing to come to anyone's aid in a time of need while also holding firm to their personal belief systems.[182] An overturned boat, a house fire, or a rock slide all have a degree of urgent communal responsibility here, one not evidenced in places that feature a Coast Guard, a Fire Department, or a Forest Service with trained representatives dependably close at hand. The resulting structure is "rigidly communal; the people you squabble with one day may save your life the next," acting with the knowledge that if it becomes necessary "you will do the same – not just out of neighborliness, but because a refusal to help threatens the safety of the entire community."[183] To break that trust and fail to have other people's backs would damage the social contract of support and respect that allows Discovery Islanders to survive and thrive in such remote places without the need for regular health and safety interventions from outside. In communities so small, there is a drive to swiftly and effectively act to protect your neighbors simply by virtue of them being your neighbors, and therefore members of a collective invested in shared survival.

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[182] Philip Conkling, "On Islanders and Islandness," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007), 199-200.
[183] Cynthia Bourgeault, "Thinking Like an Islander," *Island Journal* 7 (1990), 36-37.

What would it look like to bring the values of these communities into the grander scale of global island community imaginings? To be committed to the health, safety, and survival of one's neighbors becomes a very different undertaking when it involves interactions across national borders, between nations that have been colonial occupiers and/or heavy resource extractors of other nations, and between people who share fewer linguistic, cultural, and geographic commonalities than those across a single island or island chain. Without the factor of incredibly small scale coupled with relative isolation from outside services, members of a community are not forced to interact with and depend on each other in the same way that occurs on the Discovery Islands. This buffer of distance may make them more comfortable with indirectly causing each other harm, remaining ignorant of each other's needs, and thinking of each other as foreign or alien. Gull describes this dynamic as it plays out through political disagreement in mainland and island spaces. If you disagree with a person or group's politics in a city, "it's possible to sit in your kitchen over there and say "those bunch of jerks," but you don't know them, so there's no personal aspect to it."[184] On an island, the personal becomes unavoidable, and the people you may be in conflict with are more humanized and obviously multidimensional as a result. It is close to impossible to refrain from seeing one's neighbors and developing a sense of them as real and complex people, rather than as distant or abstract collections of political views.

It is important to remember that as human beings on a shared planet, we are all already implicated in the environmental conditions in which other people live, even when the physical distinctness of an island is not there to illuminate such a connection. In an era of globalization, even the smallest of inhabited islands are tied into a larger network of

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[184] Gull, interview by author, Cortes Island, BC, Canada, July 20, 2014.

cultural, political, and economic relationships with other communities. While their power as symbols of limits and boundedness is strong, in practice islands have a degree of permeability that demonstrates the complex interrelationships of people and places across the globe. As Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith explain in their introduction to *Islands in History and Representation*,

> The desire to perceive the island as a bounded and therefore controllable space seems to link writing on islands across the sciences and humanities, connecting the most fantastic of island utopias with the most careful of scientific treatises. Yet this very desire repeatedly serves to highlight the aspect of contingency inherent in both literary and scientific experiment. Islands are not pure: they are subject to breaching and incursion, both natural and cultural.[185]

Though the concept of islands as bounded and isolated in clear ways holds a certain appealing clarity, globalization and transnational connectivity cannot be divorced from experiences of life on even the smallest of islands. To expand from images like "'the hypothetical tribal or community isolate' is not to insist that [a region] is no longer made up of islands," but allows for an exploration of islands as they "are constructed and given meaning in regional and global, as well as local contexts."[186] Island social contexts are still distinct and worthy of attention, but to disregard the ways such a context interrelates to larger systems of trade, migration, and political boundaries is to miss an important element of island life. The ways in which the Discovery Islands and British Columbian islands more broadly have been shaped by logging for a multinational timber market is but one example among many of the connectivity between local environmental practice and global implications. Islands and the communities they support are "not just points of departure

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[185] Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith, "Introduction," In *Islands in History and Representation*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.
[186] Karen Fog Olwig, "Islands As Places Of Being And Belonging," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007), 261-262.

for various journeys by water," but also serve as receivers of "people, goods, ideas, socioeconomic and political systems, and institutional structures from across the sea."[187] Islands give back as well, providing extracted resources, tourist destinations, and a back-and-forth flow of people.

In the Discovery Islands, not only lumber and seafood is exported. As increasing land prices shift the dynamics of immigration to the region, some locals, and in particular younger generations of islanders who do not already own local land of their own, set out for larger islands or mainland communities to find work and lodging. In this process, they bring the environmental and broader cultural perspectives formed on their island homes with them to new locales. They are, in some ways, emissaries from their home communities, carrying a distinct set of life experiences and set of values not always demonstrated in other regions. They and other small island emigrants do not necessarily leave their islands behind in spirit, traveling "widely … without losing their intractable sense of identity, precisely because they have an island to anchor their journeys."[188] Even for those of us who do not live on islands in the literal sense, the islanders of the world – their knowledge, resources, and very selves – are already among us. This connectivity, the fuzziness of borders, makes islands messier and less clearly definable as pure sites of isolation, but further illustrates the importance of understanding the earth as an interrelated island community.

Thinking of islandness in a globalized world means analyzing what elements of community practice on small islands could look like when applied in a planetary sense. For example, the deep loyalty islanders demonstrate to each other reflects a structure of trust

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[187] Ibid., 265.
[188] Kenneth R. Olwig, "Are Islands Insular? A Personal View." *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007), 178.

and good faith that I find positive and heartening when thinking about the global applicability of a reframed Earth Island. The political work accomplished by Discovery Islanders also contains themes worth considering globally, placing an emphasis on respect for local knowledge and the promotion of long-term environmental sustainability. Expanded to a whole-earth scale, these traits are antithetical to dynamics of exploitation, disrespect, and ignorance. Firstly, islanders' intimate knowledge of local ecology emphasizes the importance of looking beyond government and industry sources for solutions to issues of sustainability across the globe. Cultivating a greater respect for such voices can help counter the political clout exploitative industrial forces commonly hold in shaping resource use decisions. If knowledge is power, it is time to reevaluate what forms of knowledge are considered the most stable currency, and refocus around previously marginalized voices in environmental policymaking.

Secondly, the social contract of communal support shared by Discovery Islanders has important implications for international economic policy. Islanders need to make sure that their neighbors have access to all the tools necessary for their survival – notable among them being food, fuel, housing, medicine, and transportation – to a degree not necessarily shared by mainlanders, because their neighbors serve as first responders in emergencies in a way not replicated in larger spaces. An investment in their wellbeing becomes an investment in personal security, as well as a method of strengthening community ties for the pure social pleasure they provide. In this way, political and economic practices that unevenly distribute the aforementioned essential survival tools and related resources around logics like maximum profit rather than maximum survival and sustainability run counter to the values of islandness. As Elk observed, environmental

destruction is easiest to undertake when its perpetrators believe they're in the right morally, that damage is permissible "because we're separate from nature, we're superior to nature."[189] For him, approaching environmental issues from an islander's perspective means committing to "changing the paradigm, the understanding of reality, of modern society" to one that promotes a greater respect for and sense of humanity's place within our broader planetary ecosystem.[190]

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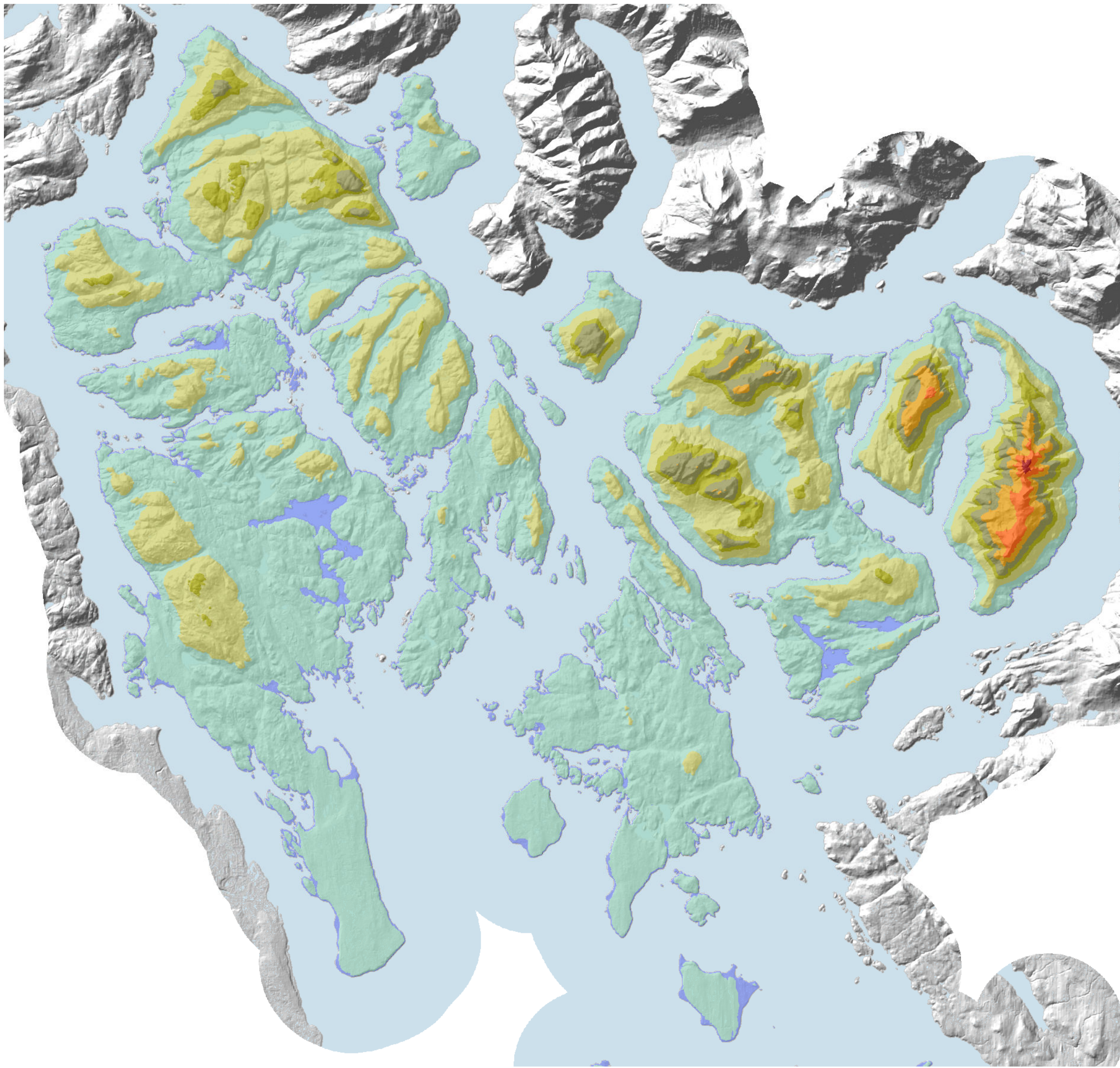
[189] Elk, interview by author, Quadra Island, BC, Canada, July 19, 2014.
[190] Ibid.

Appendices

Interview Questions (interviewees can skip questions or answer them partially if preferred)

- What is your age, level of education, income bracket, gender, and profession?
- What is your island of residence, and how did you come to live on that island? If you moved from somewhere more populous, how did that differ from island life?
- Would you describe yourself as an environmentalist? If so, talk about how you came to be one, how long you have been involved in environmental work/activism and what that means to you.
- What would you say are the most pressing environmental concerns on your island today? Have their been other concerns in the past? What was the first environmental issue you remember becoming aware of?
- What environmental projects or actions have you been involved in personally? What other projects or actions are you aware of in your community, currently and/or historically?
- How do environmental issues and actions affect relationships within your community? Are there areas of greater consensus or conflict, and how do people work within the community to resolve differences around environmental topics?
- What does being an islander mean to you?

Maps of the Discovery Islands



Produced by the author in ArcGIS, using data generously supplied by the DIEM Project.

Regional map courtesy of Discovery Islands Publishing. Find it online at http://www.discoveryislands.ca/map/index.html

Photography from the Discovery Islands (all photographs below are property of the author or used with permission)

The view from the beach at Evans Bay, Read Island.

The author meeting the mail plane at the Surge Narrows Dock, Read Island.

The author and Eve Flager of the DIEM Project, displaying a jigsaw puzzle produced using the watershed boundaries of Cortes Island as a guide. Cortes Island.

A fallen tree along the Delight Lake Loop Trail, Cortes Island.

Wildlife spotting along the Delight Lake Loop Trail, Cortes Island.

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