

Summit 2023: Action Lab Workshops

Backgrounder | Community Design and Economic Development

Humans in the region now called Vancouver Island, since time immemorial, have grouped together to share in the security and joy of community. For generation upon generation, these communities have made the most of their spectacular surroundings — the forests, coastlines and waters of these linked islands — while preserving a balance of use and stewardship. In recent times, there has been a resurgence and convergence of such practices, such as the Huu-ay-aht First Nation connecting thousands of years of earned and shared knowledge with a forestry plan built to last eons more.

As 2023 comes to a close, it is clearly time to make more of those long-term connections.

There is international instability, with climate and global societal upheavals raising the costs of living and testing the bonds of interconnected communities. The challenges faced by large urban centres differ from those being tackled in remote, rural and ferry-dependent communities, and all of them are compounded within vulnerable populations. In short, in a post-pandemic world, it can feel as though we're trying to put one fire while the next sparks on the horizon.

At this Action Lab, we're going to talk about those challenges and then explore solutions for the crucial intersections of housing, environment, planning, and creating a thriving and inclusive economy to support resilient communities for generations to come. Leaders and knowledge keepers from a variety of sectors and perspectives will share their expertise and experiences. Attendees will have a role to play as we move together toward identifying actions that the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance can pick up and carry in the coming months. A year from now, we'll gather again to discuss the results and identify next steps.

Here are several questions to think about as you make your way toward this Action Lab: What is working now and how can those success stories be shared and expanded? What are the barriers and obstacles getting in the way of these complex systems working better? And what concrete steps can be taken to improve the economic resilience of island communities?