

## This Place

### Denman is a Growing Community

*by John Millen*

Denman Island population grew faster over the last five years than it has since the early 1990's. The population figures from the 2016 census, released in February, show that Denman's resident population has increased by 14% over the last five years to 1165. This is a change from the previous fifteen years which saw essentially no increase. [Census 1996 population: 1020, and Census 2011 population: 1022]. The number of occupied private dwellings in 2016 was 592.

Hornby Island has not had a similar population increase. Their 2016 population count is 1016, an increase of 6.1% over five years. Some other Gulf Islands have had decreases in their populations: Gabriola Island -0.3%; Galiano Island -8.3%; and Lasqueti Island -6.3%.

More detailed results from the census will be released by Statistics Canada later, when we will learn more about our demographics by age groups etc. and more about housing such as the percentage of houses rented versus those occupied by the owner.

Denman Island does not aspire to endless growth. The Official Community Plan (OCP) aims to maintain the rural character of the Island and has terms to address this.

One of the Guiding Principles of that Plan is "To understand that uncontrolled population growth would constitute an unacceptable threat to the very limited space and resources of the Island; and to recognize that this understanding implies a continued need for a limit on development."

In the part of the OCP dealing with Housing the plan's objectives include "To ensure housing options preserve human diversity in the community" and "To set the maximum for the overall residential density of the Island as the residential density possible with the zoning regulations in place at the time of adoption of this Plan (2008) while providing flexibility for a range of dwelling types".

This last objective places a restriction on further subdivisions on the Island. Assuming the average number of persons per household doesn't change, this restriction on further subdivision limits the Island population to just over 2000 persons. Currently the average household size on Denman is very close to (a smidgeon under) two persons.

OK, I know you are just lusting after one more figure: if the recent rate of growth is maintained, Denman Island will reach a full house population of 2000 persons by 2036.