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## Lions Mayne Islanders of the Year



**Bill Jamieson &  
Johnny Aitken**

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# Lions Mayne Islanders of the Year

Earlier in December, we sat down with the 2021 award winners, Bill Jamieson and

Johnny Aitken. So much more could be written about both of them, but hopefully by reading this interview, you will agree with the selection committee's choice.

**Q:** Johnny, your family was from Mayne and you've lived here for much of your life. What is your family background?

**A:** It's very mixed. My mom was Coast Salish and my dad was Scottish, Haida, Hawaiian and Coast Salish. I identify as First Nations

**Q:** Bill, where was your family from and what brought you to Mayne?

**A:** My family was from West Vancouver and the Sunshine Coast and I am of Scottish/English background. I moved to Mayne in 1991 to work with Michael Crovato in his glass studio and we became partners in that business. During my first visit I became involved in a MILT production. That weekend I met the people who are still my closest friends on the island.

**Q:** Johnny, you spent some time living in Victoria, what did you do there?

**A:** I was a member of Stages Dance Company and also danced and performed with Lynda Raino. I also did home care and worked for the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. I moved back to Mayne Island in 2001 but I have maintained a connection to Victoria where I currently volunteer and direct at "William Head on Stage" for the inmates of William Head penitentiary and act as a movement coach for them.

**Q:** Bill, when and where did you and Johnny meet?

**A:** We met at the Fire Department some 20 years ago, where we were both volunteers. We became a couple on New Years Eve, December 31, 2002 and were married in 2008.

**Q:** Bill, you remain very involved with the M I Fire Rescue.

**A:** Yes, I have worked my way through the ranks since 1996 and am now a Lieutenant as well as a First Responder instructor; I

am also on the critical incident stress management team. As well, I am on the board of the Firefighters Association. Among the other community activities that we run are the Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast and the kids Halloween festivities.

**Q:** Johnny, of Bill's many projects that give back to Mayne Islanders, which are you most proud of?

**A:** That's pretty easy, his initial vision and tenacity for the complete renovation of Mayne Island's original School House now called the Paddy Lambert Memorial Hall (PLMH). This took so much work and commitment on Bill's behalf along with other island volunteers

**Q:** Bill, who was Paddy Lambert?

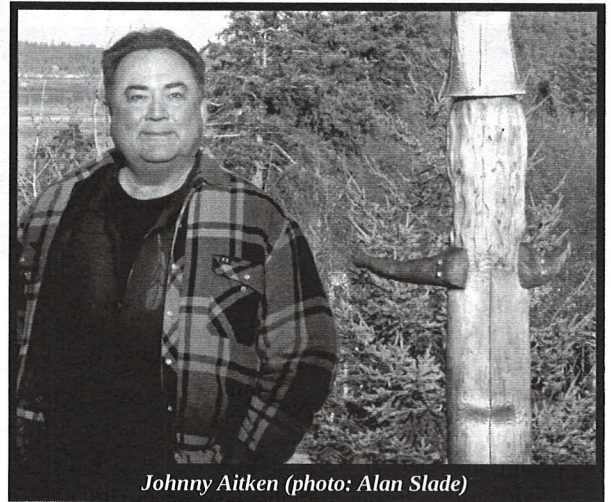
**A:** Paddy retired to Mayne Island and became Fire Chief during the 1970's and dedicated himself to developing the Fire Rescue service that we now have.

**Q:** Bill, of Johnny's many Island projects, which are you most proud of?

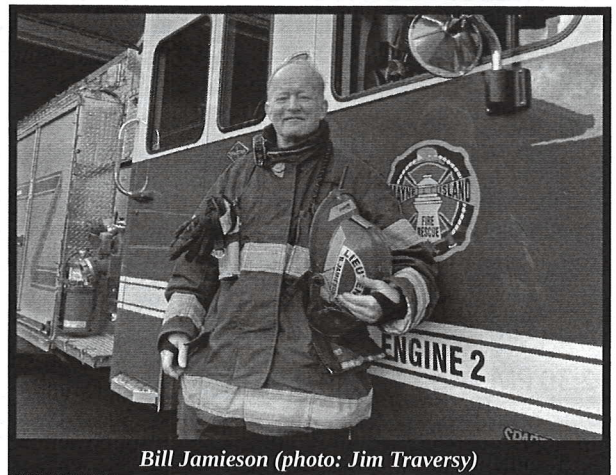
**A:** Without a doubt, his commitment to bringing awareness to First Nations issues and bringing meaning to the term "Reconciliation". He started the red dress program on Mayne that draws attention to the disproportionate number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. The program was adopted on Mayne like no other community in the area, due mainly to the great trust that Mayne Islanders have in Johnny.

**Q:** Bill, what other areas of community volunteering have you been involved in?

**A:** Some years ago, I organized the swimming float in Campbell bay and since then both Johnny and I along with other members of the community have maintained it to keep it safe for use. I am also a volunteer team member that looks after the Christ-



Johnny Aitken (photo: Alan Slade)



Bill Jamieson (photo: Jim Traversy)

mas tree lights in Miners Bay and I have collaborated with the Food Bank to obtain grants for the Schoolhouse (PLMH).

**Q:** Johnny, tell us more about your activities to bring First Nations issues forward.

**A:** I have worked alongside the Library to facilitate and promote Indigenous education. In 2015 I initiated our community acknowledgment of National Indigenous People's Day and I still volunteer for the event. I initiated the reading challenge with the Library and I help organize and facilitate their Talking Circles. In 2016 I worked with the school to create the Honouring Cairn to recognize the First Nations children sent to residential schools. I advocated for the M I Conservancy to become the stewards of the Emma and Felix Jack Park and am the park's primary volunteer.

**Q:** Bill, what is on your bucket list?

**A:** In early 2019 Johnny and I bought a

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