

Salt Spring Greenwise – First Nation Names

The First Nations who knew and made their livings on and around Salt Spring Island are Coast Salish. Their many languages evolved from a common root, and their lifestyles were dictated by similar environments.

The names in black are in SENĆOŦEN ("Sen-chaw'-then), the language of the four Saanich First Nations. The Tsawout (like "stay out", with a 'Ts') are one of these. They own the only reserve on Salt Spring, 17.2-hectares facing Fulford Harbour. They number about 760 people. No Tsawout people live on Salt Spring at present. Their home village is Saanichton, on the Saanich peninsula. Tsawout families controlled and stewarded the fisheries, seasonal villages, and permanent dwelling sites for the southern two-thirds of the island. Other First Nations fished and camped with permission from the Tsawout, through negotiated agreements or marriage privileges.

The names in red are in Hul'qumi'num, the language of eight First Nations who lived a little north of the Saanich First Nations. The Saanich and Hul'qumi'num-speaking people intermarried, but their words and pronunciation differ enough to make clear, complete comprehension difficult for those not fluent in both.

