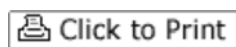




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Ladysmith Chronicle

HTG negotiator calls Amnesty International's support a 'milestone' Human rights group supports HTG

By [Stephen Thomson - Ladysmith Chronicle](#)

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A prominent Canadian human rights group has thrown its support behind the efforts of a local coalition of First Nations to resolve a dispute over land negotiations.

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group [HTG] has argued around 270,000 hectares of its members' traditional territory was illegally confiscated and privatized through an 1884 land grant to Ladysmith founder James Dunsmuir.

In 2007 the treaty group filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR], based in Washington, D.C., claiming there is no process available in Canada to resolve the issue.

Late last year the commission ruled the complaint is admissible, despite opposition from representatives of the provincial and federal governments.

In the latest development, Amnesty International Canada has called the IACHR's decision to further consider the complaint "a wake-up call to Canadian policy makers."

"It is unacceptable that Canada has created

such steep barriers to achieving fair and effective redress for the historic and ongoing violation of these rights,” says Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada’s secretary general, in a March 31 release.

“We hope that the Inter-American Commission’s deliberation on the Hul’qumi’num case will help break the impasse faced by so many Indigenous peoples in Canada.”

The HTG was been involved in the B.C. Treaty Process since 1994 and has yet to reach an agreement with the provincial and federal governments over the disputed Vancouver Island territory.

Robert Morales, chief HTG negotiator, welcomed the support from the Canadian branch of the international human rights organization. He says it validates the work of the treaty group, which represents several Vancouver Island Native groups including the Stz’uminus First Nation and Halalt First Nation.

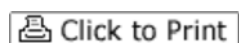
“Amnesty International’s support of the human rights violations experienced by the HTG is a substantial milestone,” Morales says in a release.

At present HTG negotiators are looking into the possibility of settlement talks with Canada under the guidance of the IACHR.

Founded in 1993, the HTG also represents the Cowichan Tribes, Lake Cowichan First Nation, Lyackson First Nation and Penelakut Tribe. It is one of the more than 40 First Nation groups at stage four of six in the B.C. Treaty Process.

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