

## Treaty group seeks the spotlight

Coalition of Island aboriginal groups hopes Olympics will bring attention to their fight

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Many First Nations on Vancouver Island want their voices heard during the Olympics, but protests that would affect events in Vancouver during the next few weeks are not on the agenda.

Robert Morales, chief negotiator for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, representing a coalition of First Nations from southern Vancouver Island, said the group will seek to raise awareness with international media attending the Olympics about alleged human rights violations and the lack of effective legal and political processes within Canada to protect human rights.

But Morales said there are no plans for the HTG to head to Vancouver to interrupt the Olympics.

Instead, Morales said a contingent of First Nations from the group will likely head to Victoria on Sunday to participate in a protest on native issues that is being organized by the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

He said the HTG is already drawing plenty of international media interest with its successful bid to force the federal government to defend its human rights record in its dealings with HTG's members with the U.S.-based Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

"There's no doubt we'll be participating in some kind of protest during the Olympics, but we want to take one step at a time," Morales said. "At this stage, we're more interested in providing the public with information on our grievances and on the developments with our case with the commission. This is an ongoing campaign and we intend to keep at it until we reach some kind of a resolution."

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group represents the Chemainus First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Halalt First Nation, Lake Cowichan First Nation, Lyackson First Nation and Penelakut Tribe.

The group is arguing a human rights complaint against Canada with the commission stating that 810,000 hectares of its traditional territory in southeast Vancouver Island, most now privately owned and developed, was illegally confiscated in 1884 as part of a land grant given to the Dunsmuir Company to build the Island's railway.

They are waiting for the federal government's response to their submission.

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