

Treaty Group Calls for Halt to Burial-Site Excavation

Gulf Islands Driftwood
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Area First Nations are demanding protection for an archaeological site currently under development beside the Harbour House Hotel. Chief negotiator Robert Morales of the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group (HTG) outlined concerns about development of the ancient cemetery and village site, Shiya'hwt, in a letter to Islands Trust regional planning manager John Gauld.

"We observe that B.C. lacks the capacity or political will to monitor and enforce developers' issued permits and conditions," wrote Morales. The treaty group cited lack of provincial regulation that recently resulted in "large-scale destruction" of burial sites at Walker Hook on Salt Spring, and Bedwell Harbour on South Pender. "We had hoped to avoid such an unfortunate situation in downtown Ganges," states Morales.

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (SRM) issued a heritage site alteration permit to Wayne Lee, on behalf of Springbay Development Inc., contrary to wishes of the HTG, said Morales. "Mr. Wayne Lee proposes to incur destruction upon some of the site's last remnant archaeological deposits for the purposes of installing utility lines and sewer trenches."

According to an HTG site inspection on March 14, Springbay has already conducted excavation and construction outside permitted site alterations. On Tuesday, a delegation from the Cowichan tribe met with Lee, Gauld and SRM heritage specialist Dave Hutchcroft from the Archaeological Permitting Section. A Driftwood reporter was denied access to the meeting held at the Harbour House Hotel. "You are not invited," said Lee.