



Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group Puts Developers on Notice in British Columbia to honour Heritage Conservation Act

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ladysmith, B.C. --- Crown Counsel has laid formal charges yesterday in Victoria against the luxury seaside resort, Poets Cove Resort and Spa, on South Pender Island for their illegal destruction of an ancient Coast Salish village and cemetery site estimated to date up to 4000 to 5000 years in antiquity.

For the last two years, the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group has demanded that Crown Counsel enforce the *Heritage Conservation Act* against Poets Cove. In 2003 during the construction of the \$40 million dollar luxury Gulf Island resort, Poets Cove is alleged to have illegally excavated and removed a massive amount of archaeological deposits containing ancient human remains and artifacts from a recorded archaeological site (DeRt-004) and subsequently dumped these remains in their resort's tennis courts, parking lots and new roadbed.

With the public announcement of Crown Counsel charges against Poets Cove, Robert Morales, Chief Negotiator for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, pronounced, "It is a good day for justice in British Columbia. It is a good day for British Columbians to know that the Crown is committed to uphold our provincial heritage legislation that protects our national heritage in Canada".

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group hopes Crown Counsel's charges sends a strong message to other developers in British Columbia to conduct due diligence and be fully aware of their accountability under the *Heritage Conservation Act* to protect their ancient First Nation heritage places and burial grounds.

"Our Hul'qumi'num people believe that our family ancestors' and their ancient resting places deserve respect", declared Morales. First Nations in British Columbia value the protection of their archaeological heritage sites not just as the source of important scientific information, but out of respect as the cemeteries of their family ancestors. In Coast Salish life, the protection of the dead is an integral part of their customary laws, beliefs and cultural practices. Traditionally, it is the responsibility of each family to protect the graves of their ancestors, whom remain a living, fundamental part of extended family households and are honoured as the source of families' inherited titles, rights and privileges.

"The protection of our ancestral burial grounds is an good example of the difficult challenge that our Coast Salish people face in our treaty negotiations to maintain our ancient cultural relationships with our ancestral lands in our Territory", stated Morales. Today, 84% of Hul'qumi'num Territory on Vancouver Island, southern Gulf Islands and Lower Fraser River, is currently held by private fee simple land. There are over 1000 recorded archaeological sites in the region, where 80% are located on private property. Many Hul'qumi'num Elders perceive the lack of public awareness and disrespect shown toward the graves of their Ancestors on private land is demonstrative of the lack of public respect towards their First Nations today in British Columbia.

In the BC Treaty Process, the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group hopes to develop a new relationship with British Columbia and Canada based on equality and respect. It is hoped that their First Nations, the province, local government and citizens can work in partnership to develop respect for First Nations beliefs, culture and tradition, build greater recognition for the authority of Hul'qumi'num people to have a meaningful say in the stewardship of their ancestral First Nation heritage, and protect and preserve their ancient First Nation heritage places and cemeteries as part of the national heritage of Canada.

For more information, please contact Robert Morales Tel: (250) 245-4660.
