

Guidelines, info needed to address heritage

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It wouldn't take much digging to uncover the problem that exists between land development on Vancouver Island and protecting culturally sensitive First Nations sites.

What a fleet of excavators may fail to unearth, however, is a good way to reconcile these issues.

Too many developers have failed to properly respect the fact bones and relics on their property may actually represent the final resting place of a neighbour's great-grandmother.

Too many First Nations leaders have failed to equip the outside community with the knowledge necessary to take cultural concerns into account while developers plan their next project.

First Nations people have to provide government with the information needed to build a better regulatory framework surrounding land development and culturally sensitive sites.

And government has to provide a regulatory framework that encourages developers to look for and report such sites in the early stages of their projects. These regulations should reward responsible practices and hit negligence or deliberate attempts to cover up sites with heavy fines.

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group is working on a computer modeling system that could predict where heritage sites might be found. It's a good start.

Developers should treat archeological testing in a similar fashion to water and soil testing - as necessary part of investigating whether or not a project is worthwhile.

Potential difficulties should be identified early on so inexpensive solutions can be found.

That's both respectful and good business.

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