

Native Leaders Unleashing the Female Voice

By Aaron Bichard
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Hul'qumi'num women are addressing a gap in female voices in treaty talks and turning a collective eye to leadership.

Approximately four years ago the Hul'qumi'num Women's Caucus was formed so women would have a forum for discussion.

Due to funding issues, it fell by the wayside.

Recently the federal agency Status of Women Canada granted the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group \$25,000 to hold monthly meetings to bring women together.

Of the grant, \$10,000 will be focused strictly on campaigning women to become involved in leadership roles.

"We'll hold six or seven sessions between now and March to get women to address all the Hul'qumi'num issues and perspectives about things that matter to them," said Shana Manson of the HTG.

"There are typically a lot of women involved at the council level but it's rarely taken past that.

"We want to engage the Hul'qumi'num women and see what they have to say."

One of the focuses will be getting women's voices into treaty negotiations, which typically relate to male-dominated issues, Manson said.

"In the treaty documents you see things like the fish chapter or land chapter, the forestry chapter, the wildlife chapter," she said. "You don't see the activities and issues more traditionally associated with women discussed, such as education, health, family development and childcare.

"If it's not addressed in treaty, then, we've been hearing from women, there is a desire to write protections for women's rights into the Hul'qumi'num constitution.

"We can try and get gender equality written right into the Hul'qumi'num constitution and if so, what would that look like?"

Manson said anyone looking for more information on the forums can contact her at 245-4660 or visit www.hulquminum.bc.ca.