

Dear CRD Council,

This letter is in support of Director Ben Isitt's motion to the Capital Regional District Board to add the urgent issue of the Grace Islet cemetery to the Board's agenda. This is in response to the ongoing residential development of Grace Islet, in Ganges Harbour (Salt Spring Island). As you may know, this islet is a small but very significant ancient Coast Salish cemetery. During the development process—the building of a single house—local Coast Salish communities have publically expressed serious concerns about this development within one of their traditional cemeteries islets. These concerns have not been adequately addressed and these communities have not been meaningfully consulted. I strongly encourage the CRD board to listen to their Coast Salish neighbours and partners concerning the respectful preservation of their ancient Coast Salish cemetery.

I strongly support a request by the CRD Directors to suspend the s.12 Heritage Alteration Permit (HCA 2011-343) issued to Barry Slawsky by the office of the Honourable Minister Steve Thomson, MFLNRO, which would allow local Coast Salish First Nations more time to be adequately consulted on this important cemetery protection issue.

I am a professional archaeologist with 24 years of experience working in British Columbia and abroad. For the past 11 years, I have focused largely on the specific kind of burials on Grace Islet. I am an expert on burial cairns and mounds, the kinds of burial features situated on Grace Islet. While my work does not specifically include Grace Islet, a decade of analysis that includes nine other cemeteries and over 500 burial features indicates that these are formal cemeteries, places of familial and community connection organized and structured by issues of kinship, identity, connection to place, and the making and commemoration of memory. Coast Salish funerary practices that have persisted for at least 4000 years, and cemeteries such as Grace Islet are fundamental to issues of Coast Salish cultural identity, connections to place, and their very history. It is my professional and informed position that Grace Islet is a cemetery in the exact same way that Ross Bay cemetery is a place for the dead. To build a house on Grace Islet is the epitome of disrespect not only for the ancient dead there, but also for the living

descendants of these people today. This situation is reprehensible and must be remedied immediately.

I strongly urge the CRD board to work with the Coast Salish communities, the landowner Barry Slawsky, the archaeology Branch, and local concerned citizens towards resolving this issue as quickly as possible before more irreparable damage is done not only to this cemetery, but to the relationship between the CRD and our Coast Salish neighbours and partners.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about this letter or the pressing issue at Grace Islet.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darcy Mathews". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Darcy Mathews, BA, MA, PhD Student

dmathews@uvic.ca

250-532-9188