

Dear CRD Council,

I am writing to encourage the CRD Directors to support the proposed motion about Grace Islet on July 9th, which attempts to assist local First Nations' ongoing efforts to be meaningfully consulted and listened to concerning the respectful preservation of their ancient Coast Salish cemetery by the British Columbia government.

I strongly support that a request by the CRD Directors to suspend the s.12 Heritage Alteration Permit (HCA 2011-343) issued to Mr. 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 burial site protection issue.

It is my understanding that many Coast Salish First Nations and citizens from Salt Spring Island and other Gulf Islands in the CRD region have previously requested the cancellation of this alteration permit by the Ministry to help preserve this Coast Salish cemetery from desecration by private residential development over the past two years. In addition, both First Nations and Salt Spring Islanders have requested that British Columbia assist with the willing seller purchase of this land as a Coast Salish memorial parkland. Both requests, to date, have been rejected by British Columbia.

If Minister Thomson similarly rejects the CRD Directors appeal, I would further recommend that the CRD Directors consider the suspension of the issued CRD building permit at Grace Islet [SG 2014-032], which may be more fully within the powers of the CRD to immediately take direct action. In addition, the CRD Directors may consider directly intervening with the property owner to potentially assist with the negotiated willing seller purchase of this property as a CRD regional park, in cooperation with other land conservancies, the provincial government and public fund raising campaigns.

Otherwise, the ongoing construction of this luxury private residence atop of Grace Islet, I fear, will remain not only a perpetual shameful eyesore to all who frequent the entrance of Ganges Harbour on Salt Spring Island for the foreseeable future, but become entrenched as a deep-seated point of grievance in the relations between local Coast Salish First Nations and provincial and local governments, including the Capital Regional District.

For these reasons, I encourage the CRD Directors to help assist all Coast Salish First Nations efforts to resolve this unfortunate conflict at Grace Islet cemetery in any practical and reasonable manner possible within your local government powers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Eric McLay  
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