



Tla'amin Nation will fight for return of lands after burial grounds are desecrated by developer at šεʔaystən (Emmonds Beach)

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[Tla'amin Territory] On February 25th Tla'amin Government was notified that a developer had carried out tree cutting, blasting and bulldozing and caused major desecrations at a sacred ancestral burial site at šεʔaystən (Emmonds Beach).

“The images are very upsetting” said Hegus John Hackett. “This follows recent desecrations by the City, homeowners and tourists at other sites. To see graders and bulldozers driving over our ancestors remains at this site is completely unacceptable. We will take all means necessary including legal and direct action to stop these continuing insults to our ancestors and violations of our culture and laws.”

The land-owner and developer requested permission to disturb the site in October, 2020 and were denied. Without a permit and in blatant violation of the *Heritage Conservation Act*, they destroyed the resting places of many of our ancestors.

šεʔaystən is a place of immense importance to the Tla'amin people. It is a village site and harvesting site. It is a place where some of our Elders and ancestors were born and many of our ancestors are laid to rest. It is the resting place of at least three of our ancestral chiefs and the site of an important spirit healing event.

“During the smallpox epidemic it is reported that many of our people got sick and died here,” said Council member Erik Blaney “Our histories tell us that due to the ravages of the disease there were not enough living to bury the dead and that many died on the shores of the creek while trying to get water. We will exercise all available options to stop further disturbances and to repair the harm that has been done.”

Tla'amin Nation is repeating and strengthening our demands to the provincial government to respect our Treaty, aboriginal rights, and international human rights under the United Nations Declaration, to fully involve the Nation in jointly investigating and prosecuting offenses, and to negotiate a shared decision-making agreement under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

“We urge the developer to do the right thing and return this land to Tla'amin Nation,” continued Hegus John Hackett “We shouldn't have to use scarce funding to protect our sacred sites when the Province fails to do so but this is such an important site, we will even offer to buy it back at a fair price if that's what it takes to protect this spiritual site and resting place of our ancestors.”

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Figure 3. This is located within the boundary of D1Se-13. Rock bluff to the right of the machine.