



**TSESHAHT
FIRST NATION**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

July 11, 2022

First Phase of Scanning Begins on Priority Locations at the Former Alberni Indian Residential School Site

(Port Alberni, British Columbia) After several months of planning and preparing, **čišaaʔath (Tseshah) First Nation** begins its first phase of scanning for unmarked graves today at the former site of the Alberni Indian Residential School.

As a caretaker Nation (a community that had a residential school in their traditional territory), **čišaaʔath (Tseshah) First Nation** has taken on the obligation of leading this project, which impacts over 100 First Nation communities in B.C. GeoScan will carry out this sacred work with the Nation. They have prior experience scanning other residential school sites and are committed to leading this project with cultural protocols in mind. Scanning will be conducted with compassion and care so as not to disrupt possible burial locations. We recognize this work may be difficult for our people and those who carry memories connected to residential schools. Together we are working to find answers from the past and bring truth to the present.

Work leading up to this point involved the creation of its project team - **ʔuuʔatumin yaqck^wiimitqin** (Doing it for our Ancestors). This team has been guided by Survivors, **haʔwiih** (hereditary chiefs), council and our people to ensure the project is grounded in values and culture. This team has also been working toward providing wellness-focused support to Survivors who generously and courageously share their stories and experiences.



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Today we show up for Survivors and for those who did not make it home. Each one of us is impacted and may feel many emotions as this work is done throughout our territories. Our ancestors have guided us to this point and are with us today as we reflect on the sacred work that has begun. We do this work together as a collective people. Prior to work beginning today, we have prepared, supported, and protected Survivors, families, our staff and communities in the *cišaaʔath* (Tseshaht) way. Culture will always remain at the forefront as we ensure people, land and scanning equipment are protected.

Scanning will span two weeks - during this time, sacred cultural work will be done. As such, cultural protocols must be observed, particularly with women who may be pregnant and children. **No media, photography or video** will be permitted **at scanning sites**, and security will be in place to protect the people and land for this work. Vehicle and aircraft are restricted. This includes implementation of a Transport Canada No-Fly zone for drones and other aircraft.

This part of the research is difficult but important work. Results from scanning will take time to analyze and process. Once this work is completed a formal announcement with summary report will be shared.

Please note that today we will focus strictly on cultural protocols. Media inquiries will be addressed starting **Tuesday, July 12, 2022**.

Kleco-Kleco,

**Wahmeesh (Ken Watts), Elected Chief Councillor
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About Tseshah First Nation

čišaaʔath (Tseshah) First Nation has over 1200 registered members whose haahuuli (territory) extends from the Broken Group Islands, including areas in central Barkley Sound, up both sides of the Alberni Inlet and the entire Alberni valley, as well as a large part of the interior of central Vancouver Island.

Tseshah First Nation is one of the 14 member Nations of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council. For more information, please visit www.tseshah.com. For more information about this project please visit www.tseshah.com/airs-team.

For media enquiries and interviews, please contact:

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