



# TSESHAHT FIRST NATION

5091 Tsuma-as Dr. Port Alberni, BC V9Y 8X9  
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March 2, 2023

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### OPEN LETTER FROM CHIEF WAHMEESH (KEN WATTS), čišaaʔath (TSESHAHT) FIRST NATION

**Re: Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) Tseshaht First Nation's 26 Calls for Truth and Justice**

On behalf of čišaaʔath (Tseshaht) First Nation, we are calling on the Government of Canada, Government of British Columbia, Presbyterian Church in Canada, and United Church of Canada to implement 26 Calls for Truth and Justice to support the healing of survivors and victims of AIRS and all residential schools in Canada.

For the past 18 months, members of the ʔuuʔatumin yaqckʷiimitqin (Doing It for Our Ancestors) project team worked tirelessly to uncover the truth of what happened at AIRS. We released preliminary findings from the extensive research and scanning performed by this team in a presentation to the public on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) Memorial Register recognized 29 students who passed away while attending AIRS. Through resources and research, the project team found during this first phase that this number is **at minimum 67 children**.

Alongside the historical research result, the project team also announced **at minimum 17 geophysical features** representing suspected graves of children who never made it home found during scanning.

We cannot let these findings become just another statistic. Our 26 Calls for Truth and Justice ensure any further investigations into what happened at this 'school' are done independently and that Survivors, their families and our community are given the wellness support they need to heal.

They are also vitally important in ensuring that Canadians and future generations continue to learn about the atrocities that happened to our people over generations. There is no reconciliation without truth and there can be no change without justice.

We call upon Canada's Prime Minister, the Premier of BC (and all government officials) and the RCMP, as well as churches and faiths to meet with Tseshaht First Nation as soon as possible to develop a solid action plan and resources to implement all 26 Calls for Truth and Justice.



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Please contact Executive Assistant Virginia Shrimpton (vshrimpton@tseshaht.com or 250-724-1225 ext. 218) to arrange a meeting in person in our community, at any other agreed location or virtually on Zoom. Survivors have made it clear that "you cannot have reconciliation without truth, and justice and accountability must occur."

To view the 26 Calls for Truth and Justice, see attached PDF document.

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**Wahmeesh (Ken Watts), Elected Chief Councillor**  
**čišaaʔath (Tseshaht) First Nation**

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**CC:**

Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Relations

Hon. Patty Hadju, Minister of Indigenous Services

Hon. Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Hon. Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care

Hon. Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety

Hon. Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Hon. Josie Osbourne, MLA for Mid Island-Pacific Rim

Gord Johns, Courtenay-Alberni MP

Chief RoseAnne Archibald, Assembly of First Nations

Terry Teegee, elected Regional Chief of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations

Judith Sayers, President, Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council

Commissioner Brenda Lucki of the RCMP

First Nations Summit Executive

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs