



TSESHAHT FIRST NATION

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For immediate release

Re: Tseshaht First Nation Mourns the Passing of City Councillor and Former Port Alberni Mayor, John Douglas

Earlier today, Tseshaht First Nation was informed of the passing of current City Councillor, former Port Alberni Mayor, and strong First Nations ally, John Douglas. On behalf of our ḥawiiḥ, Elected Chief and Council, Elders and all 1,300+ Tseshaht members we send our thoughts, prayers, condolences and loving energy to his wife, Donna, family, friends, peers, former co-workers, the city of Port Alberni staff and of course Mayor and Council.

In 2012, a still newly elected Mayor himself, John reached out to also newly, Elected Chief Councillor, Hugh Braker, extending an offer to work with the Nation. “John contacted me and suggested a Council-to-Council meeting, he was the first one to ever do this. He recognized Tseshaht’s historical as well as contemporary contributions to the Alberni Valley.” said Braker.

John worked for a number of years as a paramedic, helping many people and also as an instructor. He will always be remembered for his support in social services, where he became a strong advocate for mental health and addictions prevention, most recently the Opioid Crisis Response and combatting the housing shortage, all on behalf of those vulnerable and in need. Tseshaht Crisis Care and Wellness Coordinator, Gail K. Gus worked along side John for over the last decade. “I loved working with him. John was a visionary working on addiction. He was always there, looking for solutions. We shared a respect for one another that I will never forget.” said Gus.

John had a long history working with Tseshaht and often acknowledged the Alberni Valley as being the unceded territory of our First Nation, with a strong desire to continue his support of reconciliation. Current Elected Chief Councillor, Wahmeesh (Ken Watts) said, “As John served as councillor and as Mayor we have met through ongoing Council-to-Council meetings and for various occasions in the Valley. We will always remember him waiting to speak when he felt the timing was right, speaking supportively of our Nation, thinking strategically and more importantly speaking with passion and hope for a brighter future for us all.”

John will be remembered as one of the kindest individuals in the Alberni Valley. He volunteered much of his time to so many causes over the years. The Polar Bear Swim in particular at Canal Beach, a location for which he recently shared his vision for; his desire to see the pier re-



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established there. John knew Canal Beach was also home to our village site known as *tiipis* and wanted to ensure we were properly recognized at this location. Part of his vision was everyone working together on this project, seeing cultural artwork beautifying the area and it being a hub for tourism, sports, recreation and our community fishers.

Ensuring Tseshah was respected, recognized and supported through reconciliation was something John strongly advocated for. During this difficult time, Tseshah First Nation has shared with the City of Port Alberni our offer to support John's family, friends and the City. A tribute to our reciprocal respect for John. He will be missed.