



TSESHAHT FIRST NATION

5091 Tsuma-as Dr. Port Alberni, BC V9Y 8X9
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September 17, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RE: TSESHAHT TAKES IMPORTANT STEPS WITH THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ON INCREMENTAL ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION

“We need to have our local economy, so that we can continue to survive as a people like our forefathers” – the late George Watts, former Acting Chief of Tseshaht First Nation

Today, ɕišaaʔath (Tseshaht First Nation) is proud to announce, in collaboration and partnership with the Province of BC, our First Nation and the Government of British Columbia, a signed Incremental Economic Reconciliation Agreement (IERA). This agreement includes \$16.45M in provincial funds to specifically support Tseshaht’s near-term economic development vision, interests and capacity resources that will establish a pathway for future negotiations, advancing long-term reconciliation.

Tseshaht members gave direction to previous Council and Administrative leadership to resolve an outstanding matter (specifically regarding a forestry issue within our ɕaɕuuli (Chief’s territory), and we are thankful that this has now been resolved. We honour past teams who help bring our outstanding issues to the table with the Province of BC and laying our foundation including, but not limited to: former Elected Chief Councillor, Cynthia Dick, former Elected Chief Councillor and Councillor, Hugh Braker, for Councillor, Richard Watts and former Executive Director, Darren Mead-Miller.

We would also like to thank Tseshaht ɕawiih (hereditary chiefs) for their guidance, direction and support in this work within the ɕaɕuuli (Chief’s territory). Tseshaht recognizes our current negotiating team: Dwayne Hearn (Tseshaht Forestry Manager), Darrell Ross Sr. (Tseshaht Manager of Natural Resources), Les Sam (Tseshaht Councillor), Christopher Devlin (Tseshaht Legal Counsel (Sequoia Legal LLP)), Elected Chief Councillor, Wahmeesh (Ken Watts), Tseshaht Administration Staff, Tseshaht Council and our supports.

The Province of BC has continued to support our collaboration, cooperation and steps towards walking together with our Nation and are now providing resources towards supporting Tseshaht’s goals of self-determination, self-sufficiency and more. The IERA builds upon the joint Announcement made in July 2023 that included \$5 million in provincial funding for land purchases with housing development potential.



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We say a huge kleco, kleco to the Province of BC negotiating team of Honourable Minister Murray Rankin (Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation), Heinz Dyck (Chief Negotiation), Naomi Woods (Assistant Negotiator) and all other Provincial representatives who made this agreement a reality.

Tseshaht is excited to announce that a portion of this agreement will support upcoming initiatives including, but not limited to:

1. A future planned **Microtel Hotel** development in partnership with Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Hupacasath First Nation and MasterBUILT Hotels Ltd. In the Alberni Valley
2. Our Nation's contribution to the **construction of an access road for the development of an economic park along Highway 4 through our territory**, supporting our successful grant application for the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP) (<https://hashilthsa.com/news/2024-04-29/new-access-road-will-provide-tseshaht-gateway-future-development-along-highway>), and more

Tseshaht is also excited to share the **other exciting economic development initiatives underway or being explored** that will support economic development for our Nation, the local and regional economy and jobs for our people, including, but not limited to:

- **Nashuk Contracting** (a joint venture with ROGA Contracting) including road building, logging and civil excavation (*under development*) <https://roga.ca/companies/darlen-transport-ltd>.
- **Maktlee Drone Services** (*under development*) <https://maktleedrone.ca/>
- **Market Rental Housing development** (*exploratory*) and much more.

We once again thank all those who laid the foundation for this work, our community who gave direction to our previous leadership to resolve this matter, our former leadership, the Province of BC and all others who helped contribute to this exciting agreement. **“This agreement will not wave a magic wand to end all issues in our community or with governments, but rather a needed piece of the puzzle, in order to create economic self-sufficiency in our community that was envisioned by our previous leadership for future Tseshaht. We honour our past who have always shared, we do this work for future generations, to not only create wealth and jobs within our community; but improve the quality of life for all Tseshaht. Kleco, kleco to all those involved past, present and future.”** – Wahmeesh (Ken Watts), Elected Chief Councillor, Tseshaht First Nation

“Tseshaht is working hard to identify economic projects that will positively impact their members, while also benefiting all who live in the Port Alberni area,” said Murray Rankin,



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Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. “I applaud the leadership the Nation has shown in creating these opportunities and working towards meaningful and lasting reconciliation.”

“Building homes for people and creating new economic opportunities are shared priorities for the Tseshaht First Nation and the Alberni Valley community,” said Josie Osborne, MLA for Mid Island-Pacific Rim. “I am grateful to the Tseshaht for their vision and their collaborative approach to creating a better place for all who live here.”

Background information of the agreement:

- *The agreement is not a treaty*
- *The agreement provides resources specifically for economic development and negotiations with BC, spread out over several years and will support Tseshaht economic development*
- *This agreement does not negatively impact our Aboriginal Title and Rights*
- *This agreement recognizes and resolves a previous forestry matter between the Province of BC and the Tseshaht First Nation*
- *A copy of the agreement can be found here:*
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/0E95839F4E064CC488AFABB7A671FF4B>



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About Tseshah First Nation

čišaaʔath (Tseshah First Nation) has over 1300 registered members whose ʔaʔuʔi includes from the Somass watershed including the entire Alberni Valley, the western portions of both Horne Lake and Cameron Lake, the Alberni Inlet and surrounding lands and watersheds to the Broken Group Islands of central Barkley Sound, and out to the Pacific Ocean. Tseshah possesses Aboriginal Rights within the ʔaʔuʔi [ha-houl-thee] (Chief's territory) owned by our tayii ʔawil [ty-ee ha-wil-th], including Aboriginal Title. For more information, please visit Tseshah.com

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